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Responses to Mass-Incarceration by Faith Communities

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RESPONSES TO MASS INCARCERATION BY FAITH COMMUNITIES

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to all, both known and unknown, who have struggled and suffered under a system designed to subjugate and impede our ability to realize our potential and live a full and meaningful life. I also dedicate it to the families and communities who continue to suffer from the persistence of intentional inequalities from our nation's past that are still present and active today.

ABSTRACT

RESPONSES TO MASS INCARCERATION BY FAITH COMMUNITIES

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This research project investigated some of the hindrances that preclude churches from taking more active and impactful roles to challenge and restructure America's racially unjust penal system of mass incarceration. The research examines the evolution of the prison industrial complex, with a focus on mass incarceration and its racially unjust make-up.

The project involved research and review of theological and societal restraints that hinder American Christianity from seeing and responding to this tragic situation and living out God's concerns and decrees beyond the walls of their respective churches into the public domain of public policies and actions.

The focused methodology included a multi-case study of seven faith leaders and their congregations who had exhibited a long-term commitment to be involved in ministry with the incarcerated. The study consisted of field observations; data and record research; and interviews, which explored how and why the faith leaders came to be involved in such ministry and how they developed their programs. A specific focus of the interviews included the leaders' theological compulsions or rationalizations for doing prison-related ministry, given the great reluctance of many churches to become involved in it. The researcher intended to discover factors that may sensitize and encourage other churches to engage in this challenge to change a major injustice in culture and society today.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This research project explored one of the major issues of America's prison industrial complex. It specifically examined mass incarceration and sought to understand what is and what should be American Christianity's response to this great societal issue, especially as lived by congregations and their respective denominations.

I have been a leader of various faith organizations for years, and early on in my ministerial career I vigorously resisted becoming involved with prison-related ministries. My resistance was predicated sadly on notions of blame and shame, which this research will reveal. Although I knew racial bias existed, I pragmatically thought there was a sense a fairness in the prison system and that most of those who were incarcerated were there due to their own flawed devices, whatever they might be. When I finally accepted an invitation to visit and speak at a prison, I was shocked by the exceedingly high number of African-Americans incarcerated in the newly built institution. The revelation put me on a path that ultimately generated this research project. That prison visit was a deeply impactful experience and aroused within me suspicions, questions, and concerns that something was going on; finding answers would require a planned and organized inquiry. In addition to researching the causes of mass incarceration in America, I set out to uncover some of the factors that hinder faith leaders and faith communities to actively work against this phenomenon. I pondered whether my previous objections to engaging in prison ministry were similar to others' and if approaches or methodologies existed that might dispel such resistance.

The issue of mass incarceration in our nation is at once massive and nearly invisible to most citizens. The United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any other industrialized nation. Though Americans account for less than 4 percent of the world's total population, they represent over 25 percent of incarcerated persons worldwide (National Research Council 2014, 53). A more sobering reality is that a highly disproportionate number of those incarcerated are poor and African American (National Research Council 2014, 54). This combination creates a criminal justice system that is unjust and must be rectified for the sake of our nation's well-being.

The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) (2020a) is "committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment…and protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable…" On April 26, 2018, EJI opened The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration in Montgomery, Alabama. The museum is located on the site of a former warehouse where enslaved black people were once imprisoned and sold like commodities. The museum traces the early foundations of today's mass incarceration. EJI has researched the brutality of slavery and the terrorizing lynching of nearly four thousand men, women, and children, whose names are enshrined in the museum among other visual memorials. The following words are shared on the EJI website:

> **Slavery Evolved.** To justify the brutal, dehumanizing institution of slavery in America, its advocates created a myth of racial difference. Stereotypes and false characterizations of black people were created to defend their permanent enslavement as 'most necessary to the well-being of the negro'—an act of kindness that reinforced white supremacy. The formal abolition of slavery did nothing to overcome the harmful ideas created to defend it, and so slavery did not end: it evolved.

> In the decades that followed, these beliefs in racial hierarchy took new expression in convict leasing, lynching, and other forms of racial terrorism….
>
> Progress towards civil rights for African Americans was made in the 1960s, but the myth of racial inferiority was not eradicated. Black Americans were vulnerable to a new era of racial bias and abuse of power wielded by our contemporary criminal justice system. Mass incarceration has had devastating consequences for people of color…. (EJI 2020b)

In Washington state, the African American population is less than 5 percent of the total; however, African Americans represent over 30 percent of those currently incarcerated in state institutions (United States Census Bureau 2019c; Washington State Department of Corrections [DOC] 2014). The city of Seattle—Washington state's densest and most populous city—is located in King County, named for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ironically, African American youth constitute only 3 percent of the county's total population; yet, on average, they represent more than 60 percent of incarcerated youth in the county. Moreover, they constitute more than 70 percent of youth who have some formal association with the courts or criminal justice system, meaning they are awaiting disposition of their case or they may be on parole (King County 2020a). How did our nation arrive at this point of such massive incarceration of certain citizens?

Social norms, public policies, profit motives, and laws have contributed to America's ongoing legacy of dispatching a targeted group of citizens through its criminal justice system. Kelly Brown Douglas (2015) traces today's criminalization of Black bodies to ancient European tribes. She draws on the 98 C.E. writings of Tacitus, a Roman historian who described attributes associated with particular Germanic tribes: a peculiar respect for private property and individual rights, an instinctive love for both individual and collective freedom, bravery, strong moral character, and governance by which males of age had a vote in governing decisions and were judged by their peers in matters of

aggression or disputes. Douglas (2015, 10) writes about how such traits and beliefs reached America:

> The American Pilgrims and Puritans believed that a straight line could be drawn from the freedom loving Anglo-Saxons in the woods of ancient Germany to them. They carried their Anglo-Saxon heritage across the Atlantic Ocean…. America's democracy was conceived of as an expression of Anglo-Saxon character.

Douglas (2015, 10) links these historical and social factors to explain that "the racial limitations of America's democracy…result from the palpable Anglo-Saxon chauvinism that defined America's beginnings." Further connecting this historical reference to today's mass incarceration she asserts,

> Black people are viewed as more than just inferior to white people. They are perceived as a threat. They are viewed as a chronic danger to cherished white property. First, according to the logic of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, freedom is the right of cherished white property. Free black bodies thus possess something that does not belong to them. Free black bodies have essentially intruded upon the white space. The white supremacy ideology and natural law theo-ideology of the Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism narrative clearly demarcate space. The free space is a well-defined white space. When black people step into that social space they do so as intruders, and thus they have created a dangerous situation because white people are compelled, by divine law nonetheless, to protect their space from intruders….
>
> The twenty-fist century version of this construct is the criminal black body. The black body that was once marked as chattel, is now marked as criminal. This construct serves the same purpose as the construct of chattel. It relegates the black body to an "unfree" space. It preserves the free space as a white space. This transformation began shortly after emancipation. (Douglas 2015, 68-69, 76)

Douglas's writings mesh with professor and prison abolitionist Angela Davis's earlier and continuing work. In a speech at Florida International University in 2003, Davis posited that there is a direct connection between the slavery of America's past and the rise and continuation of today's prison-industrial complex, which is fed and supported by the mass incarceration of our nation's poor and racial minorities, including immigrants of color. In discussing the destructive, omnipresent, and oppressive prison industrial

complex and mass incarceration and its traumatic consequence, Davis eloquently made the linkage that not only is it a racialized institution, it also has historical ties to our nation's legacy of slavery: it steals labor to enrich individuals and transnational corporations, with little to no rehabilitation or penitence sought. Drawing attention to the abolishment of slavery, Davis asserted that the prison system should be abolished, too, and shared the following regarding issues of race and racism:

> Prison is precisely one of those institutions in whose structure's racism has learned how to hide…. And if you look at the population of the prison system today, you see that race matters when it comes to determining who gets to go to prison and who doesn't…. The vast majority of people in prison today are people of color: Black people, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans (Davis 2003, 27:59-29:02).

Michelle Alexander (2012, 88) asserts the need to combat incarceration with jobs and education:

> We must build a movement for education, not incarceration. A movement for jobs, not jails. A movement that will end all forms of discrimination against people released from prison—discrimination that denies them basic human rights to work, shelter and food.

At the conclusion of the Civil War and upon the abolishment of slavery, incarceration in America was both incidental and moderate in scale and scope (National Research Council 2014). This, however, changed with the Compromise of 1877. The unwritten agreement led to the withdrawal of federal troops and various agencies that provided order and protected the rights of recently freed slaves from hostile whites.

Without the presence of troops to enforce the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, searing white anger and resentment were unleased toward recently freed black former slaves and free blacks. Across the south, total

disenfranchisement proliferated through Black Codes and laws designed to contain and control the newly freed former slaves. The courts and legal system vigorously supported this reconstruction of southern life for blacks and whites that still affects lives today.

Douglas A. Blackmon (2009) details that part of our nation's dark history, where again the courts and criminal justice system partnered to advantage whites while brutally disadvantaging blacks under the cover of authority and law:

> That was a version of history reliant on a narrow range of official summaries and gubernatorial archives created and archived by the most dubious sources—southern whites who engineered and most directly profited from the system. It overlooked many of the most significant dimensions of the new forced labor, including the centrality of its role in the web of restrictions put in place to suppress black citizenship, its concomitant relationship to debt peonage and the worst forms of sharecropping, and an exponentially larger number of African Americans compelled into servitude through the most informal—and tainted—local courts. (Blackmon 2009, 47)

Blackmon outlines and presents the atrocity of this oppressive labor system, which exploited those who were jailed and imprisoned while building wealth for white individuals, local governments, and corporations. Blackmon writes, "The account of how a form of American slavery persisted into the twentieth century, embraced by the U.S. economic system and abided at all levels of government, offered a concrete answer to that total fear that gripped blacks of the south" (Blackmon 2009, 33).

From the abolishment of de jure slavery until the beginning of World War II, blacks lived with the fear of being targeted for arrest so the state could legally steal their labor. Levels of incarceration decreased up to and during World War II for most populations, but especially whites. The only group that experienced increased arrest and incarceration were blacks:

> The data are available annually from 1926 to 1946 and then intermittently for the post-World War II period until 1986. They show an increase in African American imprisonment from 1926 to 1940, while imprisonment rates were declining for whites. Prison admission rates climbed steeply in the mid-1970s but much more in absolute terms for African Americans than for whites. (National Research Council 2014, 58).

The National Academies further break down contextual associations of that growth, which contributed to current statistics regarding mass incarceration in America:

> After decades of stability from the 1920s to the early 1970s, the rate of imprisonment in the United States more than quadrupled during the last four decades. The U.S. penal population of 2.2 million adults is by far the largest in the world. Just under one-quarter of the world's prisoners are held in American prisons. The U.S. rate of incarceration, with nearly 1 out of every 100 adults in prison or jail, is 5 to 10 times higher than the rates in Western Europe and other democracies. The U.S. prison population is largely drawn from the most disadvantaged part of the nation's population: mostly men under age 40, disproportionately minority, and poorly educated. (National Research Council 2014, 29).

Many factors contributed to the accelerated expansion and growth of mass incarceration. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, President Richard M. Nixon enacted policies that directly fueled the explosive growth and expansion of our prison industrial complex. In 1994, Nixon's senior advisor and counsel for Domestic Affairs, John Ehrlichman, disclosed in an interview the intentions behind the Nixon administration's slogans, "Law and Order" and "War on Drugs":

> The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people….You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or blacks, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin. And then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders. raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did. (Baum 2016).

As CNN reported,

> Ehrlichman's comment was the first time the war on drugs has been plainly characterized as a political assault designed to help Nixon win and keep the White House. It's a stark departure from Nixon's public explanation for his first piece of legislation in the war on drugs: delivered in a message to Congress in July 1969, Nixon framed it as a response to increased heroin addiction and the rising use of marijuana and hallucinogens by students.
>
> However, Nixon's political focus on white voters, the 'Silent Majority,' is well-known. And Nixon's derision for minorities in private is well-known from his White House recordings. (LoBianco 2016)

Figure 1 dramatizes the efficiency and effectiveness of targeting an underserved community and exploiting those who live and have long suffered oppressive and unjust situations in America for the economic enrichment and advancement of others. The chart tracks the overall incarceration rate for America from the late 1920s through the first decade of the twenty-first century and vividly marks the dramatic increase made possible by public policies of both the Nixon and Reagan administrations. Supplemental resources regarding criminal justice issues, which have not been cited in this project, are listed in Appendix D.

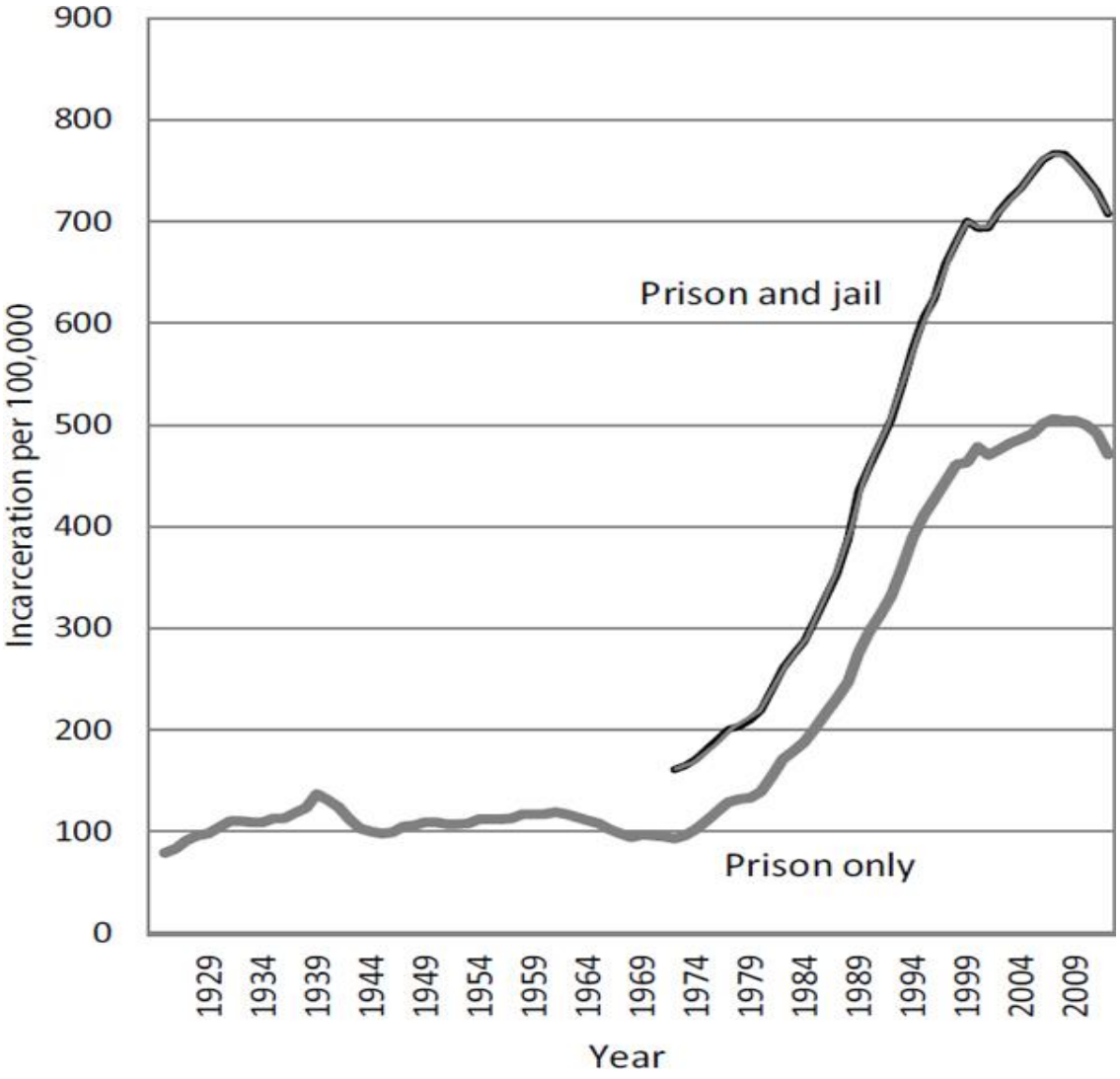

Figure 1. Explosive Growth of Prison Population. "U.S. state and federal imprisonment rate (1925-2012) and total incarceration including prison and jail inmates (1972-2012) per 100,000 residents." In National Research Council. 2014. *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/18613.

In living out a public praxis of its faith, the Church has traditionally and historically, and sometimes reluctantly, taken up causes that were unpopular and unjust. Alvin J. Schmidt (2004) writes about some of the beneficial changes and transformations to Western civilization—and nearly all humankind—that were influenced by the Church

and Christianity, benefits that came about despite the Church and Christianity's occasional accommodation of policies and actions that proved over time to be hurtful. In the foreword to Schmidt's book, Paul L. Meier writes,

> With the increasing secularization of society and the current emphasis on multiculturalism—especially in matters religious—the massive impact that Christianity has had on civilization is often overlooked, obscured, or even denied….
>
> …In the ancient world, [Jesus's] teachings elevated brutish standards of morality, halted infanticide, emancipated women [to a degree], abolished slavery, inspired charities and relief organizations, created hospitals, established orphanages, and founded schools.
>
> In medieval times, Christianity almost single-handedly kept classical literature alive through recopying manuscripts, building libraries, moderating warfare through truce days, and providing dispute arbitration. Christians invented colleges and universities, dignified labor as a divine vocation, and extended the light of civilization to barbarians on the frontiers.
>
> In the modern era, Christian teaching advanced science, instilled concepts of political and social and economic freedom, [and] fostered justice…. (Schmidt 2004, 3)

Tragically, the American Church and Christianity have been reluctant to engage in issues of race; those who bring up race or issues that relate directly to it are often ignored, especially by whites and their leaders. James Cone, often called the father of black liberation theology, speaks about this reluctance exhibited by most white theologians, and specifically notes Rienhold Niebuhr, who is often referred to as America's greatest theologian. Cone draws attention to Arthur Schlesinger's disapproval of Niebuhr's reluctance:

> Niebuhr wrote four books on American history but did not deal with racial issues in any substantive manner. When he sent a manuscript of the Irony of American History to historian friend Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Schlesinger called Niebuhr's attention to the glaring omission of the Negro: 'one irony deserving comment somewhere perhaps is the relationship between our democratic and equalitarian pretensions and our treatment of the Negro. This remains, John Quincy Adams called it in 1820, 'the great and foul stain upon the North American Union'; and I think you might consider mentioning it' [Niebuhr 1991]. But Niebuhr did not

> mention it, finding it apparently not a substantial concern. This was a serious failure by an American religious leader often called this nation's greatest theologian. How could anyone be a great theologian and not engage America's greatest moral issue? (Cone 2013, 51)

Cone goes on to conclude, "Unfortunately, white theologians, then and since, have typically ignored the problem of race, or written and spoken about it without urgency, not regarding it as critical for theology or ethics" (Cone 2013, 53).

This project explored and shed further light on this perplexity by investigating the work of noted academic theologians and the day-to-day ministry concerns of pastors in local church settings. Notable from the research are the shortcomings of seminaries and Bible colleges in sensitizing future pastors to the need for prison related ministries, though both the prophet Isaiah and Jesus himself spoke of being anointed to preach good news to the poor and release those in jail (Is 61:1, Lk 4:18). The researcher believes that even when most pastors are made aware of the need for prison-related ministry, other demands and issues leave them little time or resources to dedicate themselves to such ministry. In 2016, LifeWay Research conducted a research project centered on prison ministry and pastors' perspectives. Their opening narrative states the following:

> Researchers found widespread support among pastors for the idea of prison ministry. Eighty-three percent of pastors have visited a correctional facility. And almost all believe churches should help families of those incarcerated (97 percent) and provide care for those getting out of jail (95 percent). However, many pastors have little contact with those who have been incarcerated….
>
> About a third of pastors (31 percent) say no former inmates attend their church…few pastors have contact with many inmates or former inmates as a normal part of their ministry, said Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research. So prison ministry isn't a priority. 'When half the pastors haven't had someone from their church sent to jail, then prison ministry isn't on their ministry radar,' McConnell said.

This researcher's mainline denominational church, known for progressive stands on social issues, does not have a conference level office, a caucus group with a portfolio

charge, or a commission detailing or addressing prison ministry. Furthermore, this researcher has spoken in a number of United Methodist churches and found high interest but few or no concrete actions surrounding prison-related ministry or programs dealing with mass incarceration.

This led the researcher to ask: Why do churches resist taking up the Christian banner to campaign and agitate against these unjust public and social policies? As the researcher looked at the data, he further wondered why even traditional African American congregations lack significant responses to the ongoing, modern-day American tragedy of incarceration.

Statement of The Problem

Given the reality described above, the researcher sought to better understand what role, if any, American Christianity and its congregations or denominations ought to play in addressing the prison industrial complex and its impact on African-American communities.

Purpose and Importance of the Study

This research is important for several reasons. First and primary, it is a matter of faith. If indeed God is concerned about the cries, hurting, and suffering of the people (Ex 3:7-8 [New International Version]), then how is that lived out in our communities, especially the Christian community? If God is quoted as saying, “I have heard the cries of my people.…Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them” (Ex 3:7-8), then what do those words mean to individuals, and their families and communities, who are caught up in a racially oppressive criminal justice system that

brutalizes nearly every aspect of their lives? Jesus claims, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because [G-d] has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. [G-d] has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor" (Lk 4: 18-19). What, then, do these words of God's only begotten Son say to the Christian churches of America today? How are the Church and the faithful responding—or how should they respond—to the daily atrocities of our nation's massive incarceration of fellow citizens?

From the Old Testament to the New Testament, God has had to raise voices to preach repentance for wicked and unjust ways and urge people to seek the righteousness of God. The Old Testament prophet Amos was called to preach God's righteousness at the king's temple in Bethel, but the message contrasted and conflicted with that of the priest Amaziah, who dared not challenge the oppression and suffering of the poor. So, from God hearing the cries and prayers of the enslaved Hebrews and sending Moses to set the people free, to God sending Jesus to preach release of the captive, God's commitment to the oppressed and those living in unjust circumstances never wavers. Always in the Judeo-Christian tradition, God calls and raises voices to preach and proclaim the righteousness of God.

These questions and reflections are at the heart of this research. Christian communities of America appear reluctant to confront and address the issue of growing mass incarceration. This research seeks to understand some of the reasons for the reluctance, identify actions that a few organizations are taking, and find possible pathways to meet the challenges and strengthen engagement by the Church and Christianity.

Structural changes can and will happen when people of faith and those with good intentions come together and decide that a better and new way of living and being is possible. John Stuart Mill (Mill, 1867) said it best: “Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.”

Christian communities often respond to calls for social injustice. This researcher, for example, has prayed and worked with others to support mental and emotional health needs of youth and their families and address a formerly ineffective and costly court system that criminalized drug and alcohol additions and abuses. The results of those efforts gave the citizens of King County the Family Treatment Court Program, known as “Treatment Court,” which offers better and cost effective approaches to treating addiction (King County 2020b)

Theological Reflection and Context

How does a church come to understand its position and role in culture and society? A church’s praxis provides for and clarifies its ecclesiology: how it understands and reflects its understanding of God the Creator and God’s son, Jesus the Christ. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to the contradictions between what so many churches understood about God and what they reflected to the world. In a response letter to local clergyman and rabbis of Birmingham, Alabama, King wondered what God the communities of faith in southern states were worshipping:

> I have travelled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: ‘What kind of people worship here? Who is their God?.…Where were they when Governor Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of

> support when tired, bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?' Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? (King 1963)

The theological reflection in Chapter 2 will provide greater depth and insight into this researcher's theology, which trends toward practical theology: the study of the Church's institutional activities, praxis, and understanding of God. The section will present thoughts from liberation theologians and others who have studied and researched mass incarceration and its relationship with the church.

Theologian James Cone argues that today's mass incarceration and its symbolic relationship to the cross sadly constitutes a continuing and contemporary lynching of blacks. He further challenges American Christianity, specifically white Christianity, and its historical praxis related to America's ongoing racial legacy. He writes,

> The church's most vexing problem today is how to define itself by the gospel of Jesus' cross. Where is the gospel of Jesus' cross revealed today? The lynching of black America is taking place in the criminal justice system where nearly one-third of black men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight are in prisons, jails, on parole, or waiting for their day in court. (Cone 2013, 163)

As the researcher considered this challenge, he reflected and wondered: is there a word from God? If not, why? If so, what is it and how has American Christianity approached and responded to God's word concerning the modern-day atrocity of mass incarceration and its decidedly racist make-up?

The full theological reflection of Chapter 2 includes a Wesleyan Quadrilateral consideration of these and other questions and challenges. Thus, it starts with the researcher's experience and moves immediately to Scripture. Exploring insights from theologians such as Cone, King, and others, the researcher develops a thoroughly

Christian understanding of God's attentiveness, God's call to people and communities, and the type of liberative action needed. The chapter then examines the theological reflection within the context of reason offered by those doing research in the field such as Michelle Alexander and Bryan Stevenson.

Case Study Methodology

Since this project includes a religious aspect, elements of a case study were utilized as were components of a sociological study; together, they positioned this research as a mixed methodological project. Sensing (2011, 52) writes that mixing methods to gather pertinent research data more efficiently is acceptable:

> Some authors are protective of their turf. Mixing methods is a taboo…. If purpose is the criteria, then mixed methods are sometimes appropriate…. The practical mandate to gather the most relevant data to address the project's purpose outweighs concerns about methodological purity based on epistemological and philosophical arguments.

The writer developed a deeper understanding of multiple approaches to the social justices issues under investigation by taking field notes in the local church settings of the study; noting involvement of families; reviewing webpages to learn more about the communities examined; and exploring multiple religious beliefs, dogma, polity, politics, demographics, and differing settings and contexts.

Sensing writes, "the researcher has to know and realize the importance of their research question…the strength and weakness of one's research model is built upon it." Sensing, 2011, 19)." This researcher has spent significant time developing and maintaining a number of prison ministries and was initially surprised at the numbers of African American residents incarcerated at the penal institutions the ministries served. This pattern of over-representation continued to present itself frequently enough that

surprise soon gave way to anger, which then gave way to resolve by the researcher to explore and learn how the situation came to be. Reflecting on the circumstances that lessened and removed previous barriers to his engagement, the researcher wondered if similar obstacles prevented other faith leaders and churches from actively implementing prison related ministries to address mass incarceration.

These concerns, contributions, and methodologies compelled the researcher to shift from a single-case to a multi-case research study. Having been employed more frequently in recent years, multi-case studies and evidence derived from their use "are often considered more compelling" (Yin 2018, 78) and the overall study regarded as more robust. Yin continues that the desired and more compelling research is made possible in a multi-case study that "follows a replication logic that approximates the conduct of multiple experiments whose findings can be replicated (literal replication) or contrasted (theoretical replication)" (2018, 87). He further notes that the "analytic benefits from having two or more cases can be substantial" (2018, 88). Since results of qualitative studies are often not generalizable, opportunities for comparative analysis of data as offered by a multi-case study design seem to lend additional strength and validity to one's research findings.

Hancock and Algozzine's comparisons of qualitative, quantitative, and case study research models, as well as their data collection questions chart, provided this writer a workable understanding of the research process (Hancock, and Algozzine 2011, 12, 26).

This researcher utilized the snowball technique to find and locate research respondents. This technique is ideal when finding respondents proves to be difficult, such as when a limited number of people are engaged in the researched focus. It involves the

researcher asking people who are active or engaged in a particular endeavor if they are aware of others whom the researcher should contact.

Utilizing the snowball technique, this researcher found seven pastoral leaders and their congregations who agreed to participate in the study. Of the seven, five were pastors of Protestant congregations and two lead Jewish synagogue communities. Six of the pastoral leaders were men and one was a woman. The congregations represented suburban and city communities, all of which had access to incarcerated or previously incarcerated individuals.

The researcher employed many data points to triangulate data sources and increase the study's validity. Pastoral leaders were interviewed, transcripts were produced, and the pastors and rabbis verified the texts. The researcher charted field observation notes and kept a record of his own interpretation logs as he visited sites, conducted interviews, and considered other data. Webpages, sermons by the leaders, and other documents that offered a variety of data points expanded the understanding of the leaders' words.

Each step was considered through a thorough coding process, which relied on the various data points or impactful events in the participants' lives that gave impetus to, or affirmed, their being moved to act justly about our nation's unjust criminal justice system. Two of the pastors had questionable encounters with police in their youth in which they were arrested and processed through a system that seemed unconcerned about their well-being. One of the rabbis, as a youthful college student living in New York City, was pulled over for a minor traffic stop and found himself spending a night in what was then the infamous Manhattan jail known as the "Tombs." It struck him that he and one

other white boy were the only two whites in a jail filled with hundreds of mostly blacks and Hispanics. He wondered if blacks were the only people committing crimes in New York that night or if they were just the only ones being arrested. Chapter 4 will further expand on the data gathered from the interviews, including the words shared by the research respondents, and how the data were analyzed.

The process of coding the gathered research data resulted in three main themes. The first two represent crucial factors needed by a faith community or organization to develop a successful and sustainable ministry:

1. **Passion:** There must be deep love of God and that which God has created in the imago Dei: the image of God. Those with such passion are moved to act by the recognition that there is a breech or rupture on the vertical and horizonal planes between God and between those whom God has created.
2. **Others:** None of the work of prison-related ministry can be achieved or accomplished alone. One must be in community and with their passion disrupt, stir, and shake up others to address the sin of mass incarceration that, in all its forms, hurts and dehumanizes people.

The third theme combines two terms: shame and blame. Due to misinformation, lack of credible information to negate stereotypes, and negative perceptions, a great amount of shame exists regarding family members who are incarcerated. Compounding the issue is the blame attached to the incarcerated for possessing a range of possible deficiencies, including character flaws, poor decision making, and poor choices. Seldom do people realize that a system exists in which social and public polices function in unison to target certain racial groups, as well as those of lower social economic rungs.

The result is a continued targeting of fellow citizens to be intentionally dispatched to prison. This system incentivizes rural communities who have suffered economic trauma with new opportunities for economic recovery, whereby they benefit financially from mass incarceration.

These themes and their supporting descriptions and documentation will be further explored in Chapter 4.

Summary

This chapter introduced mass incarceration as a concern for Christian and other God believing communities to consider. It outlined the issue as it appears in the United States. It argued that the issue requires a theological response and questioned why such a response is not evident. It introduced a theological reflection model with a hint of how that will further develop in Chapter 2. Then it outlined the major aspects of the research methodology with an indication of multiple data points used in a qualitative, multi-case project. It further named the broad strokes of coding the data and the resulting themes discovered. As stated, these will be considered in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4. Finally, the chapter ended in a summary that points to the need for further research and action on this topic, which will be discussed more completely in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

This chapter expands on the researcher's practice of practical theology, which naturally evolved from a Christian background generationally nurtured in the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church states in its polity:

> Our theological task is contextual and incarnational. It is grounded upon God's supreme mode of self-revelation—the incarnation in Jesus Christ… Our theological task is essential practical. It informs the individual's daily decisions and serves the Church's life and work. (Reist et al. 2016, 82)

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral of the Methodist Church is predicated on four sources as the basis for theological and doctrinal development: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Scripture is viewed as the centerpiece from which the other sources are linked. Tradition is linked to, but not wholly limited to, traditions of the church and that which is consistent and in agreement with biblical texts. Reason is the intrinsic gift and blessing of thought from God, the imago Dei: all are created in the image of God. Lastly, experience relates to our embodied existence and how we experience the multiplicity of God our Creator in this, God's creation. The Quadrilateral acts to move one from that which is purely theoretical to a theological praxis that is practical by its nature and application.

This chapter presents the theological lens that was used for this study of America's mass incarceration. The researcher, a leader of a Christian community, first presents contextual and theological reflections of his development and experiences. Next, this chapter introduces noted theologians who share the researcher's liberation theology of moving toward action for a more just nation. The chapter concludes with theological

impulses, linked with reason and relying on research, to offer Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason for the development of an ecclesiology to address America's mass incarceration. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Douglas (2015) provides insight into both the definition of theology and the challenges one encounters when engaged in theological reflection:

> Inasmuch as theology is about God, it is a response to faith. It seeks to understand the relationship between God and the people of God. This does not always mean that what the faithful say and believe about that relationship is true, or even that they are speaking about God at all…[especially] conflicting faith claims…. And so the theological task is not just about affirmation. It is also a critical task. But, before it can be that, it must at least listen to what the faithful are saying, seek to understand it, and then place the testimonial of faith in dialogue with the Bible. The point is, any theological reflection must begin with a respect for the faith it seeks to understand.

James Cone (Cone 1997a, xi) encapsulates this writer's understanding of the church and its role and function in culture and society, especially as it relates to being black in north America. He writes,

> I still regard the Bible as an important source of my theological reflections, but not the starting point. The black experience and the Bible together in dialectical tension serve as my point of departure today and yesterday. The order is significant. I am black first—and everything else comes after that. This means I read the Bible through the lens of a black tradition of struggle and not as the objective word of God. The Bible therefore is one witness to God's empowering presence in human affairs, along with other important testimonies. The other testimonies include sacred documents of the African-American experience—such as the speeches of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., the writings of Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison, the music of the blues, jazz, and rap. Liberating stories, myths, and legends are also found among men and women of all races and cultures struggling to realize the divine intention for their lives. I believe that the Bible is a liberating word for many people but not the only word of liberation. God speaks not just one Word in only one Story but many liberating words in many sacred stories.

Cone further amplifies what ought to be a bedrock foundational praxis of the church as exemplified by the salvific actions of God to hear, respond, and be both concerned and committed to the freedom and liberation of the enslaved Israelites from

Egypt. After liberating them, God allowed the Israelites to be enslaved again and again whenever they forgot their enslavement experience and were found to be mistreating and oppressing those in their midst. Cone writes,

> In the Old Testament, faith in God is based upon a historical event of rescue, wherein Israelites become God's free people with the responsibility of spreading freedom throughout the land. Faith is accepting the gift of freedom and putting one's absolute trust in the promise of God to be with the little ones in time of trouble. When Israel lapses from this faith, in God's righteousness, and forgets her slave heritage by treating the poor unjustly, divine love is transformed into wrath. The God of the Old Testament is a god of justice, whose revelation is identical with the liberation of the oppressed. For the basic human sin is the attempt to be God; to take God's place by ordering the societal and political structures according to one's social interest. Sin is not primarily a religious impurity, but rather social, political and economic oppression of the poor. It is the denial of the humanity of the neighbor through unjust political and economic arrangement. (Cone 1980, 2)

For this writer, the ecclesiology of the church and one's faith has never been a theory or mere proposition; it is based on concerns and consequences to how people live, what they do, and why. In other words, ecclesiology shapes and impacts life, society, and culture. Social scientists speak of this dynamic as belief, belonging, and behavior. Douglas Marshall (Marshall 2002, xii), in his research of these concepts, posits that practiced rituals of organizations and their members are linked. He writes,

> It is argued that ritual practices generate belief and belonging in participants by activating multiple social-psychological mechanisms that interactively create the characteristic outcomes of ritual. Specifically, the distinctive elements of ritual practice are shown to induce altered subjective states and effortful and/or anomalous behaviors, which are subsequently misattributed in such a way that belief and belonging are created or maintained around the focus of ritual attention.

This indicates that the way a church understands and develops its ecclesiology and associated rituals positions it in one of two ways:

1. It either understands a God of righteousness and then lives and acts to exhibit and manifest as such; or,
2. It determines to alter or create some purposeful God that supports their need or existence to objectify and subjugate others.

Given these dynamics, one naturally questions when their experience, perspective, and understanding of God, Church, and the behavior or practice of their faithful adherents are antithetical to each other. At what point do they conflict with God's exhibited concern for the lowly, exploited, and oppressed?

Practical theology undergirds this study of the phenomenon of mass incarceration in America and the Church and Christianity's roles regarding the tragically unjust situation. The reference points and understandings outlined in this section present the contextual and developmental aspects of the researcher's practical theology and how it shapes and impacts his understanding of the Church, its ecclesiology, and the role it should play in culture and society.

As a bi-coastal child, I lived in Seattle, Washington with my immediate family and grew up in a diverse community of Blacks, whites, Hispanics, and Filipinos. Hence, I was immersed in a variety of cultures early in my life. Furthering my exposure to other people and cultures, were my family's travels throughout the United States. My mother was a schoolteacher, and every summer we would travel to other parts of the country. A large map of the United States hung on our kitchen wall, and my mother would push colored pins into all the locations we visited.

As I traveled this nation, going to other parts of the south in the early sixties, I was unaware that my parents shielded me from nearly all public placards or places where

racial segregation was the law of the land. They carefully plotted our travel arrival and departure destinations to avoid segregated locales, and the hotels we stayed in were always nice. I do not vividly recall personally experiencing the effects of segregation.

Without fail, we always spent some time in Mississippi on my grandfather's farm. My great-great-grandfather on my mother's side emerged from America's brutal legacy of slavery with a substantial amount of farm and forestry land in central Mississippi. A school and church were built on portions of that land, located by the main highway. My grandfather was blessed to have people who worked on it and a manager or foreman who oversaw the work and was allowed to live in a house on the land.

We made those visits to Mississippi nearly every summer until I graduated from high school and I was always struck by the stark differences in life options and conditions between Seattle, Washington and rural central Mississippi that I observed; I noticed similar contrasts in conditions for blacks between major cities like Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles and rural central Mississippi.

There seemed to be so many blacks living in poverty. Many had limited or no indoor plumbing and, to me, their lives appeared to be quite troubling and problematic. Yet those same people with seemingly limited resources and opportunities made it to church whenever the doors were open, for worship or any other community event. Church—and their attendance there—was very important to them. They also freely gave from what must have been limited financial resources to God in support of their church.

The pastor of the church my family attended and supported drove a big air-conditioned Cadillac or Buick and his wife wore furs and nice smelling perfume that lingered long after she left your presence. It was quite common for the pastor and his

wife to have dinner at my grandfather's house after Sunday's worship. My family supported the church in a number of ways and I learned from those examples to always support and give to God and my church. All those experiences and perceptions were not theoretical, but manifestly real; they contributed to the development of my understanding of what the church ought to do, represent, and mean for all people.

As I grew into my middle school years, my family continued to follow the same summer travel patterns, and I continued to witness people in Mississippi living in abject poverty. Yet, they faithfully gave like the poor widow Jesus spoke about: "This poor widow has put in more than all the others. All those people gave their gifts out of their wealth, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on" (Lk 21:1-4). Much like the widow, these poor people were giving out of their abundance of faith and belief in God; they believed that God was concerned and cared about them. Yet, the sermons preached in that church in rural, central Mississippi were akin to the euphemistic phrase, "pie in the sky." They implied that even though things were hard in the here and now, one day in the by-and-by those people living in hardship would walk the heavens' streets of gold, so they should not be bothered about their current plight or condition. At my young age, I sensed an unfairness: how could a loving, caring God so callously disregard faithful people who were presently hurting and suffering? How could that God send a message that they would continue in such a situation, unabated, but when this life was over they would go on to the glory of heaven (where, as commonly touted by many racist white theologians, "though there would be streets paved with gold, the colored section would at least have paved streets")?

As a youth, I wondered why some people were well-off, while other hard-working but less fortunate people were being preached to that their current station was meant to be, and God would reward them in the hereafter. To make things worse, or more troubling for me, people started telling me I would grow up to be a preacher some day! Silently, in my mind and spirit, I thought I could not be a party to that; in no way could I tell people to be content in their suffering, that it is God's way or—worse—God's will, designed and intended for them and their children.

Being that young, without a grasp or understanding of God on any deep social or theological basis, I struggled because I knew that what I was witnessing, hearing, and observing could not be from a God who loves some people but not others. It seemed to me there was something going on, whereby people who had reached a level of overall comfort and leisure were telling others who were suffering to accept their lesser station in life. It seemed so unfair, and sadly the church had a role in perpetuating the situation.

I share these stories to establish that I have always believed that God cares about and loves everyone. It is inconceivable that God is not hurt or concerned about what our nation is doing to those who, again, are being intentionally targeted by our criminal justice system, expedited through a prison industrial complex, and subsequently added to the growing number of incarcerated individuals. It is equally inconceivable that the church would be relatively quiet about such a serious matter.

The concerns of my youth now speak to my beliefs in both the nature and heart of God, who declares, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to

prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11). Can the Church and American Christianity live out the true meaning of God's plan for all people or are some excluded from God's grace, mercy, and plans?

Theologians

From a purely theological perspective, God speaks boldly without reservation or hesitation; God clearly hears the cries, prayers, and the hurting of those who are suffering and oppressed. As an adult, I think and reason like an adult and no longer like a child. (1 Cor 13:11) Yet, I still ask the Church, "What have you heard from God? Have you truly and sincerely listened or sought to discern deeply God's nature and intent for the last and least among us? Again, what are you, the Christian Church, doing about those things that God has shown time and time again God is concerned about?"

In this section, the researcher will engage notable theologians to frame the discussion toward greater fidelity with the ways and nature of God; for through such discussions people of faith may discover how to liberate God's word in the churches and places it is preached and taught. Through a new or revised ecclesiology, we can begin to act so that those who are suffering and oppressed may be freed.

Such discussions are critically important to the Church today as it finds itself relegated to the fringes of culture and society, especially by young people. Their presence has decreased significantly as more and more determine the church to be optional and irrelevant to their lives; this is often precipitated by the Church's public posturing on issues it views in a negative or divisive light. King (1959) spoke to this when he stated,

> Any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial. (*See also* Fosdick 1933)

So, yes, the Church has played and should play a critical role in public policy formation and deployment; but the voice, posturing, and positioning of the Church must always be about the righteousness of God. It must be about God's concern and care for the unjustly treated and oppressed. Predominate American Christianity—white Christianity—and theology has not only been silent in condemning racism and oppression, but complicit in the development and normalization of America's legacy of oppression; it has always played an active and supporting role in issues of race.

Contrasting the concepts of faith among enslavers and Black people, Douglas (2015) asserts that enslavers claimed God legitimized the use of Black bodies as chattel, whereas Black faith has always been grounded in the belief that God liberates and is with the oppressed over and against their oppressors. She writes,

> Faith is a response to God. Faith is possible only if God has acted and has initiated a relationship with human beings. Faith is the human response to God's invitation to be in a relationship. Black faith represents a resounding yes to God's offer. This yes signals black people's belief in the power of God to right what is wrong in the world, even though they find themselves in the midst of the harsh absurdity of black life in Anglo-Saxon America. Black faith is, therefore, a testimonial of the divine/human interaction between God and Black people. As such it is a witness to Black reality and Black hope. (Douglas 2015, 139)

Douglas (2015) further conveys that Black faith did not emerge parallel to the faith of enslavers, but rather grew out of the atrocities of slavery and the "conflicting claims about God" (Douglas 2015, 138) that it generated:

> Black faith was forged in the midst of the perverse and tragic paradoxes of Black life. It is a faith, therefore, that does not ignore the unthinkable and irrational terror of Black living. It takes it seriously. It does not belittle or romanticize the pains and sufferings of Black bodies. It does not revel in illusions and false hope. Neither does it allow Black bodies to give in to hardship and to be overcome with despair. Indeed, the faith born in slavery provided a weapon to resist and to fight against the religiously legitimated tyranny of America's Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism. From its inception, Black faith provided a counternarrative to those who would say that God created Black bodies to be chattel. (Douglas 2015, 138)

As one attempts to understand the absurdity of enslavers corrupting the affirming nature of God, the perpetuation of their manufactured version in which lesser beings were created for their exclusive usage and benefit, and the ancillary support of that flawed perception of existence, all associate vestiges must be de-constructed. By removing or tearing down such a theo-ideology, a theology that affirms both the love and nature of God can emerge. A theology of oppression must be replaced with one of love, justice, mercy, compassion, and grace within church institutions and beyond.

South African theologian John W. De Gruchy has lectured on the need for the Church and all Christians to embrace a public theology for Christian living that compels us to shape our lives and culture toward a more just existence for all. He writes about history as well as living and doing theology in real time:

> But doing theology is about more than understanding, for the faith is a journey and a commitment. It is about living in the world, sharing in its challenges and joys, and contributing to its well being. Faith is inseparable from *metanoia*, a conversion which turns us around so that we not only see things differently, but also begin to act differently. That is why Bonhoeffer wrote in *Discipleship*, that faith and obedience are inseparable, and later in his *Letters and Papers from Prison* described *metanoia* as sharing in God's suffering in the life of the world.
>
> The whole point of doing theology is then to come to a knowledge of God and ourselves, which contributes to human and social transformation. By transformation I mean, then, both a personal change of heart and mind, and therefore a way of being human in the world, as well as the overcoming of social and economic structures that are oppressive, in pursuit of a society that is more equitable and just. (De Gruchy 2014, 36)

Reason

Throughout the history and development of this nation, blacks have been subjected to and targeted by laws, codes, social policies, and other actions designed to impede their full and free participation in all aspects of life in America. Mass incarceration continues that tragic legacy. James Cone metaphorically cast incarceration as doing and expanding what physical lynching once accomplished. Though brutal and barbaric, such actions conveyed both a social and cultural message of diminished power and being for blacks and affirmed the opposite about whites. Michelle Alexander (2012, 205) links the atrocity of lynching with an updated version occurring daily in courtrooms across this nation:

> Today's lynching is a felony charge. Today's lynching is incarceration. Today's lynch mobs are professionals. They have a badge; they have a law degree. A felony is a modern way of saying, 'I'm going to hang you up and burn you.' Once you get that F, you're on fire.

De Gruchy (2014, 44) encapsulates theology in a public context when he writes,

> Public theology as I understand it, is best understood as a form of Christian witness that is both public engagement and ecclesial praxis. In other words, public theology is both something pursued by theologians around public issues in dialogue with civil society and political leaders, and a necessary resource for enabling the church to respond to issues in action.

Michelle Alexander more narrowly focuses on this project's subject of mass incarceration and how it has generationally disrupted poor, and especially African American, communities under the spurious claim of reducing crime and improving law and order. Alexander showcases the assertion that incarcerating blacks is merely a refined and updated version of sanctions and laws designed to limit, control, and impede the upward mobility and viability of blacks in America:

> Nearly one-half of the more than two million people in prisons are black. That is one million black people behind bars, more than in colleges. Through private prisons and the 'war against drugs,' whites have turned the brutality of their racist legal system into a profit-making venture for dying white towns and cities throughout America. (Alexander 2012, 224)

Alexander correctly refers to America's criminal justice system as "the criminalization and demonization of black men." She writes, "…Incarceration is one habit that America seems unlikely to break without addressing head-on the racial dynamics that have given rise to our latest caste system" (Alexander 2012, 298). Cone presents a telling and jarring comparison of America's incarceration brutality to that of ancient Rome:

> Nothing is more racist in America's criminal justice system than the administration of the death penalty. America is the only industrialized country in the West where the death penalty is still legal. Most countries regard it as both immoral and barbaric. But not in America. The death penalty is primarily reserved, though not exclusively, for people of color, and white supremacy shows no signs of changing it. That is why the term 'legal lynching' is still relevant today. One can lynch a person without a rope or tree. (Cone 2013, 163)

Cone continues to link brutality and Christianity by stating,

> When I heard and read about the physical and mental abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, I thought about lynching. The Roman Empire that killed Jesus at Calvary was similar to the American Empire that lynched blacks in the United States and also created the atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many white Americans seemed surprised and even shocked that such torture and abuse could come from the U. S. military. But most blacks were neither surprised nor shocked. We have been the object of white America's torture and abuse for nearly four hundred years.
>
> …Just as the Germans should never forget the Holocaust, Americans should never forget slavery, segregation and the lynching tree.

Mass incarceration and our criminal justice system continually visit atrocities—often fatal—upon those unfortunate enough to be captured by it. The stories of Philando Castile and Sandra Bland are prime examples (Haffner 2018; Hassan 2019); Eric Garner

was choked to death live on camera by New York police officers in broad daylight (Hafner 2018); Trayvon Martin was hunted, pursued, and then shot by a neighbor-"cop wannabe" (CNN Editorial Research 2020); the Central Park Five were wrongly convicted and incarcerated for several years for a crime they did not commit (Harris 2019); and Kalief Browder, unable to post bail, was held at Rikers Island jail for over three years without charges ever being brought against him or having a trial; he was finally released and subsequently exonerated but committed suicide upon release (Gonnerman 2014). The Church as an institution representing the righteousness of God must act to eradicate the unjust and brutal phenomenon of America's acceptance of mass incarceration.

Summary

This theological reflection reviewed my early experiences and perceptions of life and church. It presented scriptures from and about God's salvific entrance of time, history, and culture, in which he called leaders to tell oppressive rulers, "let my people go" (Ex 9:1). The following passages expound on and encapsulate my life experiences and understanding of reality through the lens of faith: "What does the Lord require of you, O mortal, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mi 6:8) and "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. [G-d] has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Is 61:1).

The phenomenon of America's mass incarceration has not and will not escape the notice and concern of God. My personal experiences and theological reflections speak to and give credence to the belief that the Spirit of God moves to agitate and disrupt systems

and conditions that rob and kill dreams, joys, and opportunities for people to live just and meaningful lives. God declares, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chr 7:14).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This project's central research question asked how and why does a gathered faith community become actively involved in ministries and programs related to mass incarceration? The research sought to identify impediments that prevent many faith leaders and their respective churches and synagogues from being deeply or actively involved in addressing mass incarceration in North America.

This project employed a qualitative multi-case study of five Protestant congregations and two Jewish synagogues. The study researched the communities through interviews with their faith leaders. The interview questions sought the leaders' thoughts, reflections, approaches, and actions regarding how they and their congregations and synagogues understand or interpret Scripture. The interviews further asked how their interpretations compelled them to act from a theological basis on issues related to America's current phenomenon of mass incarceration.

This chapter describes the process of conducting the multi-case study. It reviews the methodology, the data gathering process, and the sample population. It considers the limitations and delimitations, the validity, the ethical concerns, and other aspects of implementing multi-case study research. In addition, the chapter delineates the coding process used to arrive at the transcendental themes that will be discussed in Chapter 4. The multi-level coding system considered the interview transcripts as well as the

researcher's recorded field notes. It also reflected the researcher's observations of the congregations and synagogues' geographic locations and websites. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Methodology

The researcher initially intended to conduct a single-case study on a local Baptist church with a long history of supporting ministries related to previously incarcerated individuals. That church also offered an extensive background and wealth of resources dedicated to supporting individuals emerging from recent incarceration. However, at the outset of the research, the pastor and leadership lost some key personnel through retirement and relocation; additionally, many volunteers who were critical in the church's prison reentry ministry moved to other ministries. The congregation ultimately determined to shift its focus and resources from prison ministry to homelessness.

This researcher, still wanting to delve into and focus on communities who might address this societal ill, shifted the research foci. To remain within the primary parameters of the research design, the researcher sought other faith leaders and communities who were actively involved in prison-related ministries. Thus, the research evolved from a single-case study to a multi-case study of God-centered communities addressing some aspect of the incarceration system. Throughout the process the study remained a qualitative study. This section considers first the qualitative methodology. Next it delineates how a multi-case study methodology fits within the qualitative methodology spectrum.

Qualitative Methodology

Since qualitative research relies heavily on interviewing and controlled conversing through open ended questions and dialogue, it was an appropriate model for this project. The approach gave structure to the research effort to satisfy considerations and concerns related to academic rigors and standards. Sensing (2011, 51), in writing about the nature of such research, states,

> Research, simply defined, is a family of methods that share common characteristics of disciplined inquiry. Research methods contain data, arguments, and rationales that are capable of withstanding careful scrutiny by members of an associated guild. Research prompts us to understand problems, ask questions, and pursue specialized modes of inquiry. (Sensing 2011, 51)

The qualitative research method also provided a wonderful opportunity to gather precise data about the leaders' beliefs and motivations that guided them to purposely involve their respective communities in addressing mass incarceration in some manner. By designing appropriate open-ended questions, the researcher gathered useful data to identify actions, approaches, and methodologies that others may employ when confronting similar situations and concerns. The researcher found this most attractive since he wanted to address both enhancements and impediments regarding the Church's role in approaching the unjust matter of mass incarceration.

Qualitative research lent itself well to this project in that it seeks to understand a specific phenomenon. Sharan Merriam (1998) identified five characteristics that all qualitative research has in common:

- the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning
- the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis
- the use of fieldwork

- an inductive orientation to analysis
- findings that are richly descriptive

In wanting to provide a template or informative approach for faith communities seeking to start their own prison ministry related to mass incarceration, the researcher uncovered this valuable guidance from Sensing (2011, 57):

> Qualitative research systematically seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. This type of research produces culturally specific and contextually rich data critical for the design, evaluation, and ongoing health of institutions like churches.

Creswell (2009, 37) argues that using a qualitative research model is further enhanced by documenting "assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." Since this project addressed the social and human problem of mass incarceration, qualitative research offered the best methodology for the study.

Multi-Case Study

Yin (2018, 62-63) writes, "The same case study may contain more than a single case. When this occurs, the study has used a multiple-case design, and such designs have increased in frequency in recent years." As previously described, the initial single-case study morphed into a multi-case study that involved Baptist, Church of God in Christ (Pentecostal), Jewish, and Non-Denominational faith communities. Yin also advises,

> Defining your research question(s) is probably the most important step to be taken in a research study….What is my study about? Am I asking a 'who,' 'what,' 'where,' 'why,' or 'how,' question…the form of the question can provide an important clue regarding the appropriate research method to be used. Remember too, that the methods can overlap. (Yin 2018, 11)

It is worth noting Creswell's (2009, 73) understanding of the nature of a case study: "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information." These sources of information may include, among others, the following: observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports. Sensing (2011, xv-xx) writes,

> At the heart of the DMin program is the intent that projects serve the church, develop ministerial practice, and be applicable to other practitioners in the field…DMin projects are not done in isolation. While action research requires fluency with academic resources of libraries, it is foremost a mutually shared engagement with others.

Sensing's understanding of the type of research that most benefits the Church supported this researcher's focus on the Church and mass incarceration. This research was undertaken to investigate the critical impediments that hinder most churches from involvement in and development of ministry related to prison and mass incarceration. The researcher also sought to identify positive actions or events to guide churches toward prison ministry in meaningful ways.

Sample

This study did not intend to gather data from a large population nor use statistical analysis and numerical data to prove its findings; thus, the researcher used a purposeful sampling procedure (non-probability) that depended on his knowledge of the population to select individuals he believed would be good sources of information (Patton 2002, 100). As a non-probability method, snowball sampling was also utilized to identify possible respondents who were beyond the researcher's network. Used to "locate participants who are difficult to find" (Patton 2002, 102), snowball sampling allowed the

researcher to tap his current network of initial respondents for referrals and select new data collection units as offshoots of existing ones. This technique is based on the trust engendered among initial respondents who believe in the researcher's study.

Snowball or chain sampling, according to Michael Quinn Patton (2002, 237), begins by asking "well situated people": Whom should I talk to (about the topic of the study)? By asking a number of people whom else to talk with, "the snowball gets bigger and bigger, until a chain of recommended interviewees forms a kind of shortlist" (Patton, 2002, 237). Thus, the researcher sought leaders (predominately pastors) and their respective congregations who shared a history of active involvement in prison ministry prior to a person's release, after their release, or both, and their reentry back into society. Using the snowball technique, the researcher found pastors who were recommended by the previously interviewed pastors. Furthermore, in conducting background research for the project, the researcher came across a noted sermon delivered by a rabbi who would become one of the study's participants. After agreeing to be interviewed, that rabbi directed the researcher to a colleague he felt would also benefit this research.

Through referrals from pastors and congregations engaging in prison ministry, the researcher found five Protestant pastors and two Rabbis who have led their respective congregations toward action. Of the seven faith leaders who were interviewed, one is a woman and six are men. The world of prison-related ministry is small and is currently comprised of many more men than women. The sample population of this project reflects overall engagement and I was thankful that the woman respondent agreed to share her significant experience and valuable insight. As Table 1 shows, the faith leaders represent various racial ethnicities, faith traditions, and perspectives. Their congregations are

located in suburban sites such as Bremerton, Washington and urban sites in Massachusetts and the Bay Area of California.

Data Collection

This research centered on interviews with pastors and rabbis of formal faith communities. The pastor of the originally proposed singular case study was immensely helpful in directing the researcher to other pastors who, with their respective congregations, were currently or had previously been involved in meaningful prison ministry for a number of years.

The researcher sent a letter (Appendix B) to the recommended leaders, which included background information on the topic; a copy of the informed consent form; and contact information for the researcher, the University advisor, and the School of Theology at Seattle University. Interviews were conducted in-person, when possible, at the participating pastors' church offices or venues they chose. The intention was for the settings to be comfortable and convenient to them. The two rabbis' interviews were conducted over the phone, since one resided in the Bay Area of California and the other was currently serving a synagogue in Massachusetts.

The researcher chose to conduct individual interviews rather than group discussions to encourage deeper expressions of critical junctures, revelations, and experiences that led to their involvement in prison ministry. Follow-up discussions were conducted via phone and Facetime and ranged from thirty minutes to one and a half hours; all interviewees were informed that their interviews would be recorded.

This study utilized the interview protocol prescribed by Creswell (2009, 183) and included the following:

- basic information about the interview (recording time, date, venue, name of interviewee, mode of recording interview, etc.)
- introductions (short discussion about study, structure of interview, space for questions, and definitions of terms, if any)
- interview content questions (with provisions for probes)
- closing instructions (e.g. thanks, assurances of confidentiality, requests for possible additional interviews, and validation of interview transcripts)

Minimizing the possible "imposition of predetermined responses when gathering data" (Patton 2018, 353), open-ended questions were asked during the interviews. Open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to respond in their own words and opened the door for emergent themes to surface. The format of the interviews was thus semi-structured, wherein themes, issues, and questions—though predetermined—were open to further probes and follow-up questions (Sensing 2011, 107). Questions were formulated and asked in English, the primary language of all respondents and the researcher. Appendix C includes the full list of interview items and questions.

The researcher did not worry that he would influence the participants' responses, since the participants were all respected leaders of congregations and synagogues. Nevertheless, the researcher encouraged them to be themselves and open and honest in their responses; he did not tailor questions or attempt to guide responses toward any pre-conceived direction or outcome. The researcher avoided reinforcing answers with

anecdotes and, instead, used tactful probes to elicit more complete answers: “Is there anything else you would like to add?” or “How do you, or can you, explain that?” or “Could you say a little more about that?” or “Would you unpack that, or say some more, please?” Thus, the researcher sought to instill as much objectivity as possible while attempting “to be more conscious of possible coercive content in their line of questioning” and “maintain neutrality in question wording and in affect” (Patton 2002, 163).

Field Observation Notes

Interviews were the principle data collection source employed by the researcher. During each interview, the researcher made both mental and written notes. Many of the notes and observations were made during casual conversations at the start of each interview or after its completion. Following Creswell’s (2009, 119) observation protocol, the researcher listed both “descriptive” notes (about what happened) and “reflective” notes (about the observer’s experiences, hunches, and learnings). Descriptive notes, adds Creswell (2009), include observations related to the five senses (seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted) and provide a chronology of what transpired or a picture of the setting. These correspond to the same observation techniques used in most ethnographic studies; those techniques allow the researcher to employ the “narrow your gaze” approach (Sensing 2011, 98) or use their senses to notice interactions, gestures and behaviors, contexts, and interjections. Reflective observation notes, on the other hand, include preliminary themes observed or any problems, issues, and concerns about transpiring events.

Archival Documents

The researcher pursued background information about each participant and their community, including documents, website pages, flyers, notices, and publications to expand the understanding of the case-study. Such archival materials and resources may prove helpful to others by providing insights into responses to the phenomenon of mass incarceration. A list of these materials may be found in Appendix D.

Demographic/Organizational Structure

To present the depth and magnitude of mass incarceration in America, the researcher used demographic information from the United States Census, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Washington State Department of Corrections, King County Department of Corrections, as well as a number of other data gathering agencies, departments, and entities. That data, combined with the "narrow your gaze" approach (Sensing 2011, 98), enabled the researcher to present as honest and unbiased representation of racial and economic demographics as possible. It also offered a precise numerical understanding of America's current fixation on mass incarceration.

Strategies for Maintaining Trustworthiness

To assure the trustworthiness of this research study, extensive efforts were made to adhere to formal protocols required by Seattle University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher was aware of the Tuskegee Study in which "600 black men, 399 with syphilis and 201 who did not have the disease" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2020) were studied without their informed consent. The study was initially projected to last six months, but it went on for over forty years by the U.S. Department of Public Health Services. Other studies conducted by the U.S. government include

experiments on disabled people and prison inmates. Since this study required interaction with human subjects who are involved with recently or currently incarcerated individuals, certain permissions to assure their protection were necessarily secured. Creswell notes the importance of protecting the respondents and creating and maintaining trustworthiness:

> As researchers anticipate data collection, they need to respect the participants…. Many ethical issues arise during this stage of research…. Also, the researcher needs to consider the special needs of vulnerable populations…the researcher develops an informed consent form for participants before they engage in the research. This form acknowledges that participants rights will be protected during data collection. (Creswell 2009, 89)

The researcher also completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program as a prerequisite for the IRB application.

Informed consent

This study acknowledged the need for research subjects to approve the data collection process and be guaranteed their rights (Creswell 2009, 89). Informed consent letters were given to the respondents prior to the interviews and included the following elements stipulated by Creswell:

- the right of participants to withdraw from the study
- assurances of confidentiality and minimal risks
- acknowledged benefits for the subject and the organization
- information about questions to be asked during the interviews, etc.

The interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis and no material compensation was provided to respondents.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The dominant presumption of most researchers is that respondents' privacy and the confidentiality of data will be protected. Patton, however, notes that recent trends also

acknowledge the insistence of some subjects to be named as to advance an advocacy or "owning their own stories" (Patton 2002, 411). Unless otherwise requested, the interviewees' anonymity was maintained through numerical/alphabetical representations. The researcher assured respondents that no information about the interviews or research process during the data gathering stage would be shared. Nearly all participants indicated they had no concerns or reservations about their responses being shared. Indeed, they deemed their involvement in this research project as supportive in addressing possible approaches to reducing mass incarceration and helping faith communities become involved in addressing the issue.

As part of the efforts to assure confidence in the study, the researcher also arranged to conduct the interviews in a safe and neutral place that allowed primarily for convenience and a degree of privacy. Audio-recorded data and transcripts were stored in password-protected files and set for disposal five years after the research concluded. These efforts were pursued with reference to Patton's (2002, 36) assertion that "researchers have an obligation to collect the information in such a way that confidentiality is protected."

Validity and Reliability

Proving that the credibility of their research is unaffected by extreme biases and subjectivities remains an issue for qualitative researchers. More than simply manifesting tendencies for biases, qualitative researchers are challenged to engage in a "systematic search for alternative themes, divergent patterns and rival explanations" (Patton 2002, 553) to enhance the credibility of the study. The researcher subscribed to the following

definition of triangulation by Judith Bell (2005):

> …a way of cross-checking the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce as full and balanced a study as possible. (as cited in Sensing 2011, 72)

Yin (2018, 81) suggests that researchers seek "at least three ways of verifying or corroborating a particular event, description, or fact being reported by a study." For this study, the researcher referred to the following types of triangulation proposed by Sensing (2011, 44) and Patton (2002, 556).

Data and Methods Triangulation

The researcher compared and contrasted data from censuses and demographics, archival documents, field observation notes, historical and organizational inputs, and the interview narratives. Transcripts of interviews were sent to the interviewees for their validation. This opportunity to collect data from many different sources, says Yin (2018, 166), allows researchers to be "rated more highly, in terms of their overall quality, than those that relied on only single sources of information."

Analyst/Investigator Triangulation

The study converged multiple sources of evidence. This established consistency of the data through various review points, including open-ended questions, archival records, documents, and observation by the researcher. Yin (2018, 121) writes:

> By developing convergent evidence, data triangulation helps to strengthen the construct validity of your case study. The multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon. The phenomenon of interest may differ in different kinds of case studies. First, in many case studies, the phenomenon of interest may pertain to a behavioral or social event, with the converged finding implicitly assuming a single reality. Use of evidence from multiple sources would then increase confidence that your case study had rendered the event accurately. In other kinds of case studies, the phenomenon of

> interest may be the participant's distinctive meaning or perspective—because you have adopted a relativist orientation to appreciate the possibility of multiple realities. Triangulation would still be important, to ensure that the case study had rendered the participant's perspective accurately. If nothing else, you should at a minimum have queried the same participant several times or on several occasions—which would then serve in its own way as a set of multiple sources.

Theory Triangulation

Theological and organizational theoretical frameworks provided a "thicker" and more valid description of the phenomenon being investigated. Consequently, data collection and analysis derived concepts and meanings from responses and occurrences. One strength of qualitative research, according to Yin (2018, 93), is "its ability to capture these meanings" or to "search for concepts—ideas that are more abstract than the actual data in an empirical study." This collection of concepts may be "assembled in some logical fashion that then might represent a theory about the events that have been studied." Thus, in addition to the theological frameworks presented in Chapter 2, it served the research to bring in sociological or organizational theories to reinforce the validity of concepts derived from the research. Further discussions on this will form part of Chapter 4.

Other Ethical Issues

The researcher has preached twice at one respondent's church. He has also attended and hosted meetings of clergy. These ecumenical gatherings usually considered how Christian communities can and should respond to various community or statewide social justice issues and concerns. Yet, these events and occurrences did not compromise the nature or validity of this study or negatively influence the researcher. There were no significant ongoing or prior relationships with the other research respondents.

Data Coding and Processing

The researcher anticipated that narratives and other data collected from the interviews, demographics, censuses, and other archival documents would consist of an array of words and figures to be coded, clustered, and interpreted. To initially analyze the data, the researcher found it crucial to maintain a central database of all information culled from the data gathering phase. This process, described by Creswell (2009, 169) as the "coding" phase involves "aggregating qualitative data into a small number of units of information."

A "code" in qualitative inquiry, says Johnny Saldaña (2013, 3), is "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data." This code is a "researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes" (Saldaña 2013, 4). Owing to the researcher's subjective role of assigning codes, the coding process is never a precise science but rather, primarily, an interpretive act (Saldaña, 2013). Researchers use "coding filters" (Saldaña 2013, 4): the researcher's personal constructs, concepts, language, models, and theories that structure the study. This researcher, therefore, did not discount the possibility that personal involvement in the study as a participant observer and his use of subjective filters indeed influenced concepts and meanings derived from the data.

Throughout the process of coding, the researcher also noted codes that were used repeatedly; this refers to Saldaña's (2013, 5) description of a coder's primary goal of finding "repetitive patterns of action and consistencies in human affairs as documented in

the data." As suggested by Saldaña, the researcher was constantly looking for patterns that were similar or different, appearing frequently or seldom, following an order or sequence, corresponding to an event, or depicting a cause and effect.

Codes, patterns, and units were assigned meaningful labels and further grouped into "broader units of information" called "themes" (Creswell 2009, 189). The results expressed how various emergent themes interrelated to "tell an overall story about the phenomenon under study" (Creswell 2009, 162). Since this research was a multi-case study, the coding process enabled the researcher to cluster responses by ministerial contexts and compare and contrast the emergent themes.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

One aim of data analysis and interpretation, suggests Patton (2002, 432), is to "transform data into findings." This process, adds Yin (2018, 208), can be pursued through any combination of procedures such as, "examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining (narrative and numeric) evidence." Yin suggests developing an analytic strategy that begins with "playing" with available data in view of "watching for patterns, insights or concepts that seem promising" (Yin 2018, 212).

Yin likewise proposes at least four strategies, which the researcher can adopt as possible modes to analyze data. First, this researcher subscribed to the strategy of "relying on theoretical propositions" (2018, 213) by analyzing the data with reference to the sets of research questions, review of literature, and theoretical and theological frameworks. The researcher also kept in mind the collected data and ascertained if they were addressing the initial questions raised in the study. This stage of analysis and interpretation of data, implies Patton (2002, 437), shall first reference the questions asked

and generated “during the conceptual and design phases” of the research and also the insights that “emerged during data collection.”

Second, the researcher employed Yin’s (2018, 214) strategy of “working data from the ‘ground up.’” This inductive method, says Yin, begins by recognizing how one useful concept or two can jumpstart an “analytic path” and possibly suggest additional relationships and/or support the formulation of a “grounded theory.”

Third, the researcher developed relevant case descriptions as an alternative mode of analyzing a wide array of generated field data. Providing descriptions for collected data, according to Yin (2018, 208) may “appear trivial” and “not seem very insightful.” Classifying relevant descriptions and categories of data, however, is not necessarily easy (Yin 2018, 208). Researchers need to overcome the tendency to generate “mundane description that wanders all over the place with no apparent aim” (Yin 2018, 208). This researcher referred to Yin’s suggestion to describe case study data according to certain categories, such as routine functions, diversity of peoples/social groups, nature of social institutions and structures, and processes over time. Developing categories complemented the understanding of a multifaceted societal phenomenon and how various churches can or should understand and approach mass incarceration. This researcher was especially interested in generating data descriptions that “promote some subsequent action—typically calling for changes in public policy or in policy agendas” (Yin 2018, 214). The researcher also subscribed to Yin’s proposal to analyze data as a way of “explaining how or why events came about, or alternatively how or why people were able to pursue particular courses of action” (Yin 2018, 216).

Lastly, the technical quality of data analysis can be further improved by attending to alternative or rival explanations. The research should be able to "formulate and present evidence related to realistic or plausible rivals, seeking to show how the evidence might favor the rival" (Yin 2018, 218) as if it were the primary explanation.

Summary

The measures outlined in this chapter manifested the researcher's aim to assure truthfulness, validity, and credibility of the study. Throughout this section, the researcher imparted transparency and honest disclosure of methods and principles employed to assure the validity of the research. The salient parts of this section included the following: a discussion of the use of qualitative research; the benefits of using a multi-case study design rather than a single-case study; modes of data collection; strategies for maintaining trustworthiness of the study; and the steps of data encoding, analysis, and interpretation. Relevant documents are included in the appendices. The next chapter considers the findings as they evolved from the coding and analysis process.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

This research study sought to learn how and why a church or gathered faith community becomes actively involved in ministries and programs related to mass incarceration. This study also strove to identify impediments that prevent many faith leaders and their respective churches and synagogues from actively addressing mass incarceration in North America.

The project employed a qualitative multi-case study of five Protestant congregations as well as two rabbis and their Jewish synagogues. Through individual, semi-structured interviews, the leaders shared their thoughts, reflections, approaches, and actions regarding their congregations and synagogues' interpretations of biblical Scripture and how those interpretations compelled them to act on America's current phenomenon of mass incarceration. The researcher also kept field notes and gathered data from webpages, books, sermons, and congregational demographics to create an in-depth understanding of each case.

This chapter presents the findings and results of the interviews. The background and context of the research participants will be discussed, as will the critical motivations or concerns that led to their advocacy for and/or involvement in prison ministry related to mass incarceration. The research questions and the participants' responses will also be presented. The pages of raw data collected from the responses, combined with the background research outlined in Chapter 3, were reviewed, coded, and analyzed to reveal patterns or common conditions or experiences among the leaders and their communities.

Analysis

The data was analyzed using a coding system that exists within Microsoft Word and Excel. In addition, the researcher broke down the various responses of the interviewees by noting if each response related to attitude, behavior, knowledge, awareness, discourse, capacity, systems, motivations, or participations. This coding supports the application of computer software to identify recurring, related themes and associations that link commonalities among those interviewed. Another form of coding used was "values coding" (Saldaña 2016, 131) in which one identifies three basic values in statements as they appear in the responses. The three basic terms utilized in this coding matrix are "values, attitudes and beliefs" (Saldaña 2016, 131): one's beliefs are linked to their belonging to a certain sub-set or social grouping, and therefore their beliefs and belonging act to modulate ones behavior. This type of data analysis is helpful when one wants to understand or determine courses of actions to improve or modify the behavior, performance, or enhancement of an organization. Saldaña (2013, 140-141) summarizes Rallis and Rossman's (2003) descriptions of evaluation coding:

> Evaluation Coding applies (primarily) non-quantitative codes to qualitative data that assigns judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy (Rallis & Rossman, 2003, p. 492)…. To Rallis and Rossman, evaluation data describe, compare, and predict. Description focuses on patterned observations or participant responses of attributes and details that assess quality…. Comparison explores how the program measures up to a standard or ideal. Prediction provides recommendations for change, if needed, and how those changes might be implemented.

Finally, the researcher was interested in program evaluation. Patton (2002, 18) defines this type of coding as "the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future

programming. Policies, organizations, and personnel can also be evaluated." Since the researcher sought to challenge church communities to take on activities and programs related to incarcerated individuals and the system that incarcerates them, program evaluation was effective for considering various data points not included in the interview transcripts themselves.

Thick Description of the Faith Communities

The interview questions (Appendix C) were designed to obtain background information for each interviewee, including the setting of their ministry engagement. The questions also explored their theological praxis, and how that praxis influenced their understanding, approach, and development of ministries that reflect their epistemology. The questions asked how long each participant had been involved in their present ministry setting and what led them to ministry. The interviews also explored each participants' understanding of God and when and how they know their words or actions are in fidelity to God's words, teachings, and will. The participants were asked to share what led them to link their active ministry leadership role, the need to address prison and mass incarceration, and their respective faith communities together. Furthermore, they were asked what thoughts, if any, they had when hearing the terms "prison-industrial complex," "mass incarceration," "criminal justice system," and "jail" and if any of those terms had personally affected them or impacted family members or others in their lives. Their responses became part of the data to be coded and analyzed by the qualitative method associated with phenomenological inquiry and research. Table 1 provides contextual descriptions of the research respondents.

Table 1: Participant Background Data

Title	Community	Gender	Faith tradition	Location	Ministry Focus	Members
Pastor	1	Male	Baptist	Tacoma, WA	Reentry; transition	900
Pastor	2	Male	Baptist	Seattle, WA	Reentry; transition	175
Pastor	3	Male	Baptist	Bremerton, WA	Reentry; transition	75
Pastor	4	Male	Non-Denominational	Federal Way, WA	Reentry; transition	400
Pastor	5	Female	Church of God in Christ (COGIC)	Lakewood, WA	Reentry; transition	500
Rabbi	6	Male	Jewish	Berkley CA	Public awareness and policy change	900+
Rabbi	7	Male	Jewish	Boston, MA	Public awareness and policy change	1500+

Community 1

This Baptist congregation is situated in Tacoma, the second largest city in Washington state. It is located in the Hilltop area, immediately south of downtown Tacoma. The community, whose majority population was formerly African American, has been undergoing gentrification and is now populated by people of other racial backgrounds who are buying houses and moving into the community. Many of the houses are single family dwellings built in the forties and fifties. The community is dotted with a few small commercial strips and has two regional grocery stores serving it. Two of the city's largest hospitals are in the neighborhood; they are slowly expanding their surrounding campuses to keep pace with the growth of medical services they offer. The congregation itself is a relatively large, urban church and membership is just under one

thousand. It has a great mixture of young and old, married couples and single individuals, young families and empty nesters. Its racial make-up is predominantly African American and its members' employment identities range from professionals, to service workers, to retirees. This congregation started its formal housing reentry ministry, titled Hands Up Ministry, in 2003 under the leadership of their current pastor who was installed in 2000. The ministry began in a house it purchased across the street from the church. Over time, the church acquired four more adjacent houses and housed eight men per house. Volunteers provided counseling, job readiness support, and work support for men coming out of any of the state prisons and seeking to return to the Tacoma Hilltop area; they also supported men who wanted to start afresh in a new location. The ministry faced ongoing challenges to secure adequate state funding through housing vouchers and pay for the services required to support the formerly incarcerated in successful reintegrating into society. Professional reentry services were better served and responded to by state funding sources than those of this volunteer-based church ministry.

Community 2

This church also is a Baptist congregation and is located in Skyway, which is south of Seattle and just blocks beyond the official city limits. Due to dubious circumstances, they lost their prior building in the same neighborhood and now rent from another local congregation in a remodeled storefront. Skyway is an unincorporated area with a population of 23,662 (United States Census Bureau 2019b) It is a racially diverse, majority-minority community: African Americans comprise just over 25 percent of the population, Asian and Filipinos roughly 30 percent, Hispanics almost 9 percent, and whites about 28 percent (United States Census Bureau 2019b). The economics of the

community vary; large apartment complexes sit at the top of the hill and house recent immigrants as well as individuals and families living in subsidized housing. In contrast, expensive view and waterfront homes line Lake Washington. Many houses in the community were built during the forties to accommodate workers in the shipping and aerospace industries during World War II. Newer homes are also being built on lands once used for rural purposes that have given way to urban expansion resulting from Seattle's population growth. Due to Skyway's proximity to Seattle and the cities of Renton and Tukwila, gentrification has slowly begun to cause shifts that will result in economic and racial demographic changes.

Prison-related ministry is woven tightly into the fabric of this Church. The pastor grew up in a major city in northern California, where gangs and violence were present in his neighborhood and personally affected his family life and social development. Drugs, violence, jails, and prisons were ever familiar to him and close members of his family. When he was installed as the pastor of the church, roughly eighteen years ago, he arrived "with a built-in passion and ministry to go into the jails and prisons." This would be his primary ministry, he told the church, warning members not to vote to install him if they did not want to do such ministry.

His church's prison ministry begins behind the walls. They acquaint themselves with incarcerated men in Monroe Prison in Monroe, Washington and work to support them prior to their release to a house that the church owns. The pastor is affiliated with apprenticeship and job training programs that willingly accept former and recently released felons who want to turn their lives around. He himself went through the training for corrections officers wanting to work in prisons and was disheartened by what was

taught and the way the corrections officers were being trained. He said it was “appalling, how those officers are being trained to treat people.” He said he “has to be there, to let them [the incarcerated] know people do care about them.”

Community 3

This small Baptist Church is located across the street from the downtown core of Bremerton, Washington. The city of Bremerton supports the large Bremerton Naval Shipyard, which is a major employer for the city and surrounding region. Small wood frame homes are closely compacted near the church and throughout the downtown core. These homes were built in the forties to house the many shipyard workers who flooded in to support the war effort. Newer, larger homes with brick and masonry can be found as one drives farther westward and north from the downtown area. The predominate racial make-up of this congregation is African American, though African Americans make up less than 6 percent of city’s total population; whites make-up nearly 75 percent, Asians 5 percent, those claiming two or more races 10 percent, and other races fill out the remaining 5 percent (World Population Review 2020). Since the naval shipyard is the largest employer in the city and surrounding region, many retired military veterans live in the area.

The pastor of this congregation grew up in the South and indicated that he had some troubles early in his life. He said that people had helped him and given him a second chance, which gave him hope and inspired him to do the same for others. He founded his church roughly thirty years ago with eight men who all had experienced being jailed or incarcerated. He proudly shared that for the same thirty years he has been

going to Purdy Prison for women, which is a short drive from Bremerton, to give hope and encouragement to incarcerated women.

This African American pastor was attacked by a group of white supremacists one night in a small town outside of Bremerton. The local county prosecutor was reluctant to investigate until other local pastors, some from the Seattle-Tacoma area, raised the issue with news stations and the State's Attorney General's office. The perpetrators were initially charged with simple assault, but the charge was later upgraded to a hate crime. This is shared to highlight the risk of just being who God has created one to be and that striving to do acts of righteousness is not always easy, convenient, or without inherent risk. According to the pastor who shared this story, some clergy have expressed fear and discomfort about getting involved with prison ministry in the greater Bremerton area; some who have considered becoming involved in such ministries have experienced threats and arson attempts to their churches.

Community 4

This is a non-denominational congregation. The pastor founded the church twenty-six years ago after selling his home and business in southern California and relocating to the Sea-Tac/Des Moines area near Seattle. He shared that he received a call from God to sell everything, move to Seattle, and start a church for people in and just coming out of prison. His congregation is in Federal Way and is predominately made up of former felons and their families, as well as people affiliated in some way with its prison ministries. The racial breakdown of the congregation, from the researcher's visual perception, appeared to be about 40 percent black, 30 percent white, and the remaining 30 percent mostly Hispanic. The congregation shares its building with a predominately

African American Pentecostal Holiness Congregation. The other congregation worships on Sundays and this pastor's congregation worships on Friday and Saturday nights. There is little, if any, distinction between this congregation and its prison ministry, which makes sense as the church was started in prison. This pastor's church and prison ministry offices are in a commercial business strip near the Federal Way Mall. The people who make up his congregation live a good distance away from the church, while an upper middle-class, mostly white community lives near it.

The prison ministry this pastor oversees was established in 2005 and is quite detailed and expansive, considering it is a local church ministry supporting the incarcerated. When this researcher visited, it had over twenty-five full-time staff members and owned more than thirty-three houses in counties throughout the state: Whatcom County to the north; King, Pierce, and Yakima Counties; and Spokane County in Eastern Washington. The pastor stated that he associates with over a thousand recently released individuals and the ministry is highly active in nearly all the prisons in the state. He shared,

> We operate a prison ministry as our team goes behind the walls of state prisons and county jails conducting services and bringing a message of hope and recovery. We provide a clean and sober faith-based housing program that is open to all. We do not discriminate due to criminal history, sexual orientation, faith, or beliefs.

One hopes and prays that such an expansive prison related ministry is doing good works of mercy, and this church is. However, the researcher was troubled by the pastor's responses to the interview question regarding institutional aspects of mass incarceration. The respondent seemed not to consider them and alluded solely to the idea that the people his ministry supports are or were incarcerated solely because of bad decisions. Upon

further reflection, he shared that the absence of fathers in nearly all these men's lives is a possible contributing factor to their flawed decision-making abilities, and in many instances he and his ministry must be fathers to them.

Community 5

This church is part of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) and its very active prison ministry supports incarcerated women at Purdy Women's prison. The leader, per the polity of her church (in which women cannot hold the title or be fully understood as and called Pastor or Reverend) is a Minister of Music and Evangelist. Her leadership is acknowledged informally rather than formally. The Church is in south Tacoma, close to Lakewood and a short drive to Purdy Prison, where this faith leader goes weekly for various prison ministries. Her ministry with the incarcerated women is her passion and she is more anchored to it than she is to her church, although her supporters and volunteers are recruited and drawn from the church. She indicated that the church's governing leadership has a different focus than she does. When asked, "What goes into determining the ministries your church will actively develop and support?" she responded,

> What they do is more out of religion corporately, but individually there are a lot of people doing ministry work. What I'm trying to say, and this is just my perspective to me, the focus of the church is more on making sure the worship service is going along the way it should be, like the Sunday School is up and going, the prayer meeting is up and going. There are individuals that go out to do ministries but not from a corporate level, no.

This church is situated in a well-established community. Many of the commercial buildings and homes bear a distinct, mid-century architectural style, and some blocks are lined with older homes. The community is solidly middle-class and, given its close proximity to Lewis McCord Joint Military Base, many people are either employed by the

military or retired from it. The large congregation has over five hundred members who reflect the overall demographics of the surrounding community, except that the congregation's racial make-up is predominately African American.

Community 6

This synagogue is in south Berkley, California near the University of California, Berkley. It is in an upper middle-class neighborhood and most homes are owner occupied. Some that are in proximity to the university are linked to the school; however, moving farther away one sees homes that are well maintained and single family occupied, with manicured front yards. The community is comprised of professionals who work for, or are associated with, the university or other businesses in this coastal city. The synagogue fairly represents the demographic make-up of the community, and although it claims and practices a level of orthodoxy, women have held positions of power for years. The recent past president of the executive committee board was a woman—which is uncommon in orthodox settings—and several women over the years have served in that capacity. The synagogue also has relaxed, unsegregated seating: women and men are not separated and women are not required to cover their heads while in worship or when the Torah is returned to the Ark. The rabbi shared why such an open and modern, yet traditional, approach was important:

> I would describe myself, my Judaism, as being traditional and egalitarian in my Judaism. I like a more traditional service where a lot of Hebrew is spoken, but I also like a service where men and women can participate equally; that was always important to my mom. This was the only option in Berkley that checked both boxes, and the people here are nice and warm. I always enjoy being a part of this congregation.

Based on standard methods for determining the size of a synagogue's membership (counting how many families are registered, multiplying the number by three, and then

adding a factor for single and widowed members), this synagogue has about one thousand congregants.

This synagogue's method for determining the role or roles it will play concerning public policy or social justice originates from both its congregants and its leaders. When asked what determines its social justice actions, the Rabbi responded,

> It's a combination of things partly driven by mainly the people in the congregation who are involved in things they care about and the rabbis as well. The rabbis feel it is an important issue for the congregation to speak out on and be involved in, so I might feel that criminal justice reform is an important issue and specifically bail is something big in California, ending money bail…. That kind of came out of the process, there was no board, or executive committee there was just some congregants here who wanted to organize it and kind of ran it…. That's one way things will happen. Another way things might happen is there might be a rally going on against hate; there were some white supremacist [rallies] going on in Berkley—some Trump supporters were trying to get a rise out of people of Berkley—and the congregation felt like here is something we support and want to get involved in and make a statement about. So the congregation sort of just set things off.

Community 7

This synagogue is in the Greater Boston (Middlesex County) area of Massachusetts and is led by a rabbi with a national and global presence both within and beyond the Jewish Diaspora. He has addressed the US Senate and Congress; been arrested at numerous political demonstrations for justice; is a contributing writer, teacher, and lecturer; and appears regularly on cable news outlets. He previously served a synagogue in Berkley, California for years and co-chaired a Jewish social justice coalition for the greater San Francisco region. His new synagogue, by this researcher's estimate, is fairly sizable and somewhat larger than the prior one he served. Its affiliated families number over 350; thus, per the formula shared for community six, it has roughly fifteen hundred members.

A description of the town indicates that it "offers residents a dense suburban feel…most residents own their homes.…There are lots of coffee shops, and parks" (Niche.com Inc 2020). Per the United States Census Bureau (2019a) the community's racial and economic demographics break down as follows: the total population is 23,662; within that, whites represent nearly 70 percent, Asians 25 percent, and African Americans almost 2 percent. The median household income is $137,910.

In a Boston Globe article (Mass 2017) welcoming the new rabbi, the retiring rabbi, who served for forty-one years, described the synagogue as being somewhat in the middle in its praxis, not very conservative nor wildly progressive. "The new rabbi said…that his priority was to sound out his congregants." Though he had a proven record of social justice actions, which his new temple was aware of, the rabbi was very measured in how he began his ministry. "If you're out front and there's nobody behind you, what are you leading?" He went on to cite lessons learned at his previous job as the San Francisco regional co-chair for Bend the Ark: A Jewish Partnership for Justice. The article also noted,

> In his sermons, he said, he won't rail against politicians, but rather the consequences of their policies. 'Are we going to talk about [immigration agents] showing up at a school? Are we going to talk about how we build an economy on the backs of immigrants and then make political hay by demonizing and deporting them? Is that treating people in God's image?' the new rabbi asked. 'How could we not talk about that as if Judaism had nothing to say?'
>
> Chris Whitbeck, co-chair of the search committee, said the panel knew of [the new incoming rabbi's] activist background before it interviewed him. 'We're not asking him to change who he is or to lessen his own political or social values,' Whitbeck said. 'But we do ask him to be aware that whatever he does should be with the goal of bringing disparate people together.' (Maas 2017)

The Rabbi went on to say, "The rabbis in the Talmud say let the honor of your fellow brother and sister be more important than your own" (Maas 2017).

Themes

Three primary themes arose from this research project. First, the researcher discovered that each pastor has the utmost passion for representing and doing God's work. Secondly, these pastors and rabbis are propelled by the need to find others in their congregations who are passionate about such ministries and work. The third theme was somewhat surprising to the researcher. It concerns shame and the propensity to wholly blame those who are incarcerated for their situation. The remainder of this chapter will consider the major themes in detail.

Theme 1: Passion for God's Work

Without a doubt, passion for developing and maintaining a prison ministry that addresses and responds in some way to mass incarceration is fundamental to the ministry of each of the pastors and rabbis interviewed for this research project. The protestant pastors' passion and dedication are found in Jesus's words encouraging people of faith to live and strive to be righteous: "I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Mt 25:36).

For the Jewish rabbis that passion is expressed as "tikkun olam," a concept defined by acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world. The phrase is found in the Mishnah, a body of classical rabbinic teachings around social policy to ensure the safeguard of those who may be at a disadvantage. The following scriptural text, shared with the researcher by one of the rabbis, comes from the book of the prophet Micah in the

Old Testament:

> What shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? The Lord has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God! (Mi 6:6-8)

This rabbi took to heart the demand to act justly and love mercifully. As Table 2 reveals, the respondents used several phrases that contributed to the theme of passion. Indeed, the researcher was interested in the notion that there were Scriptural imperatives that fueled, supported, and inspired these faith leaders and their congregations' work for justice.

Table 2. Passion for God's work (code words and verbatim phrases)

Love and Care	All are image of God	Nobody seemed to care	Passion and strong desire to help people	Move and shake the congregation
God put this on my heart.	Hunger and thirst for justice	We need to treat all people right.	It ain't easy.	Another form of slavery
…as teenager, saw some brokenness in world, had interest to make better, do healing around that.	…not here to tell exactly what God wants, I can talk of compassion, love for all people, for all people created in God's image…	…yes, we have to stand with the oppressed, and say that is not okay, we are with them, not pharaoh…	God sees oppression, God cares, makes sure oppression does not stand	If church met needs, less violence and crime…
…have a stigma about prison, there hasn't been a prison yet I've been in they tell me family members haven't done anything for 'em."	…very first time I went in, Lord spoke to me, 'I was in prison you visited me,' when I go in what I see is Jesus sitting in the seats, great opportunity…	Oppression, black folks, discrimination, hurt, pain, that's my passion, that's what I see most of, what I see being served the least.	Jesus healed on Sabbath, expects us to meet needs	Go into the world, we know the church is doing its role, able to feed hungry, cloth naked, house homeless, go to prison…

The table depicts various aspects of passion for God's work and communicates a deep commitment by the faith leaders. One pastor stated his passion as part of a Scripture imperative. He said, "When I was sick did you care for me…in prison did you visit me" (Mt 25:43). He went on to declare, "I started my church to do God's work for people nobody seemed to care about. I know that when people get locked up, folks on the outside forget about them." He shared that he not only refused salary or pay to start his church's prison ministry, he also took the training to become certified as a corrections officer. He took the training to better understand the workings of the prison and later used that knowledge to facilitate a mediation between the guards and prisoners.

Another pastor talked about his congregants as his sheep, using an oft-quoted passage from the Gospel of John: "If you love me, take care of my sheep…" **(**Jn 21:17). "I saw people incarcerated and knew they were loved by God. I was so compelled by this call, I prayed to God**,** sold and left my business to do this [prison ministry] work God put on my heart." This pastor has been doing his reentry ministry since 2005. He now has a network of forty houses throughout Washington state. He has a ministry presence in nearly every prison and corrections facility in the state.

The two rabbis referred to Scripture from what Christians often call the Old Testament. One cited a passage from the Book of Genesis: "God said 'Let us create them in our likeness, both male and female…" (Gn 1:25). He then asked, "All persons have been created in the image of God; do we not understand that? Why do we not get it?" He further exclaimed, "We have to treat all people right, it is our teachings, our tradition, we realize and know what it means to be treated wrong…" The other rabbi cited the universal Jewish experience of the Exodus as a reason for Jews to deeply understand

other people's experience of both exile and liberation. In this context he cited, "Thou shall neither vex a stranger nor oppress him, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex 22:21). Then he acknowledged the challenge when he exclaimed, "I have to move and shake up my congregation to the sufferings of others, which we must share and address, don't forget our story." He further explained that he tries to get the congregation to understand the plight of others, especially the situation of African Americans in this country.

One Protestant pastor spoke about his own journey and its impact on his life. He admitted, "I got into some trouble once, and a pastor brought me into his home, and his church welcomed me. They did everything to get me going, it meant a lot to me. That's why I do this, it was done for me." It is no surprise then, that the pastor chose to lodge his work in a passage that speaks of brotherly love: "Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated…" (Heb 13:1-3). He so firmly believes this he brings "people [recently released from prison] to my home. Feed them, give them help getting a job, someplace to stay, to get back on their feet, because it ain't easy." Another pastor replicates this action: "I go into the prisons, we pick them [the incarcerated] up, we bring them to church, to community and family events, I don't care what people think about it. We do this, I do this…" He takes the action based on a scripture that speaks about the

power of action to inspire others to recognize and emulate the work of God: “I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness. I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you. And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people. As a light to the nations” (Is 42:6).

Finally, the only woman pastor spoke mostly about working with women who are or have been incarcerated. She lodges her ministry in justice and cited one of the beatitudes: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt 5:6). More succinctly than the other respondents, she named injustice by its manifestation in the prison: “Prisons are overcrowded, People not rehabilitated…another form of slavery…women’s prison overcrowded…move people to worst prisons at two a.m. at night, no warning…black’s sentence lot longer than whites, barriers.” In the face of this systemic injustice, she very clearly locates her ministry in passion: “Prison ministry, any ministry, you have to have a passion for it…you do it when you’re tired…when you’re happy or sad it removes all excuses…you have a passion, a strong desire to help people.”

Theme 2: Recruiting others, overcoming impediments, and investigating ways to support the prison related ministry

These insightful faith leaders were and are fully aware that they cannot undertake such a monumental task alone. They realized they would need the dedication, work, resources, and passions of others to develop and establish a prison related ministry and then all those things again for its continued operation and maintenance. They sought, recruited, and developed people who would move the ministry from being something the pastor or rabbi solely wanted to a ministry of the whole church. These faith leaders were

innovative in researching and investigating ways to achieve the best outcomes for those who are incarcerated while not over burdening their respective faith communities.

What is or should be the proper response from people of faith when they experience or witness harmful or unjust situations? Theologically speaking, righteous indignation is generally understood to be energy created within the soul or spirit of the faithful, righteous individual to act when or after they have witnessed or experienced a hurtful, wrong, or unjust event.

Mass incarceration in America is a historical and current major injustice, so this question must be asked: why are so many faith communities and their respective leaders so reluctant to address this massive wrong? Cone addressed the failure of America's white theologians and faith and religious leaders to understand and write about the racial sufferings and oppressions of others, especially when manifested as mass incarceration; he also asked why their failure was not surprising. Cone writes in detail about notable white theologians' insights concerning racial injustice and oppression, and he copiously cites Reinhold Niebuhr (1934, 1943, 1956, 1960, 1964), who is often regarded as America's most influential theologian of the twentieth century and possibly American history:

> Niebuhr speaks about 'God's judgement on America.' He calls 'racial hatred, the most vicious of all human vices,' 'the dark and terrible abyss of evil in the soul of man,' 'a form of original sin,' 'the most persistent of all collective evils,' 'more stubborn than class prejudices,' and 'the gravest social evil in our nation.' (as cited in Cone 2013, 38)

Cone further shares about Niebuhr (1945), "Niebuhr has a complex perspective on race-at once honest and ambivalent, radical and moderate. On the one hand, he says that 'in the matter of race we are only a little better than the Nazis' (as cited in Cone 2013, 38). Continuing his criticism of Niebuhr's ambivalence and near silence regarding white Christians and the white church's attitude toward racism and oppression, Cone shares these thoughts:

> Niebuhr had 'eyes to see' black suffering, but I believe he lacked the 'heart to feel' it as his own…. It has always been difficult for white people to empathize fully with the experience of black people. But it has never been impossible…. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, during his year of study at Union (1930-1931), showed an existential interest in blacks, befriending a black student…attending and teaching Bible study and Sunday School, even preaching at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. (Cone 2013, 41, 42)

Cone concludes his thoughts concerning Niebuhr's near silence on oppression by observing that as the spectacle of public lynching by white Christians recedes, the courts and criminal justice system are beginning to fill the void, and the nightmare of threats and injustice continue unabated in America for blacks. Referencing a comment made by Malcolm X to the Amsterdam News in 1963, Cone writes:

> 'While Dr. King was having a dream,' Malcolm told a reporter shortly after King's 1963 March on Washington address, 'the rest of us Negroes are having a nightmare' (Amsterdam News September 1963, 6). Niebuhr could have heard of the nightmare in the black community from many people. While spectacle lynching was on the decline in the 1950s, there were many legal lynchings as state and federal governments used the criminal justice system to intimidate, terrorize, and murder blacks. Whites could kill blacks, knowing that a jury of their peers would free them but would convict and execute any black who dared to challenge the white way of life. White juries, judges, and lawyers kept America 'safe' from the threat of the black community. Thus, the nightmare in black life continued to deepen as progressive whites like Niebuhr remained silent about lynching. (Cone 2013, 49)

The faith leaders of this project preached, taught, and exemplified the Word of God by their actions outside the walls of their respective churches and synagogues. They persisted and overcame objections to implementing prison related ministries and addressing the phenomenon of America's mass incarceration. The faithful, striving righteous take their cues from the Almighty, who "hears the prayers of the righteous" (Prv 15:29). God heard the troubles and struggles of the enslaved Israelites in Egypt and responded by sending Moses to lead them to freedom:

> The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and [G-d] remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. (Ex 2:23-25)

Five of the pastors and rabbis researched for this project had personal experiences with our criminal justice system: either they had been arrested and processed through the system earlier in their lives, or they had immediate family members who were incarcerated. One of the pastors, who runs a ministry for the recently released, was arrested last year at the Senate offices of Mitch McConnell, senior Republican senator from Kentucky; the pastor was demonstrating for better affordable healthcare for all Americans. Another rabbi shared that close friends and some family members of his had been arrested at public protest events, but none of them had spent more than a couple of hours being processed for their protest involvement. The lone pastor who had never been arrested, nor had any family members who had been arrested, was the exception.

This research indicates that a leader with a passionate commitment to address the evils of incarceration can awaken within those of faith a call to action against the unjust and oppressive criminal justice system that feeds America's mass incarceration.

One pastor shared about sensitizing his congregation to support ministries with the incarcerated:

> While I was an associate minister…I wasn't shy about where God had brought me from, so that gave others in the church some peace about saying 'I'm so glad Reverend you shared that because I have a son in prison'…so God used that to tear down that stigma and set people free from that.
>
> I think you have to be holistic in ministry, especially in the African American churches because the majority of them are always about heaven…we forget about why we are living down here…so we create so many stigmas so members of our churches had to live in closets because they had a kid that was gay, or a kid that was on drugs or husband an alcoholic, or you know, I suffer with depression so we put on our superman uniform on Sundays.

This pastor's passion and ability to preach about it from the pulpit provided an opportunity and enabled him to address an issue that was impacting his church and community. His approach engendered greater support and minimal opposition to his church's ministry with the incarcerated.

Another pastor shared a similar response concerning impediments to starting a prison related ministry: "It's a lack of knowledge and understanding, not knowing because they [the congregation] have a stigma about prison…" This pastor spoke of preaching and teaching what the church looks like and what it is involved with when it is doing the will of God: "We go out into the world…it's about the church coming to where people are hurting. We know the church is doing its role for [G-d] when we're able to feed the hungry, cloth the naked, house the homeless, go to the prisons, assist the widows, orphans."

One of the more politically active rabbis, who has been arrested a number of times at political demonstrations, shared the following about impediments and determinations his church considers to overcome resistance and identify the ministries it will undertake:

> That's a good question, my board would probably like to know also…the question is, for people who have a religious identity, the very reputation as religious communities is on the line right now, there are so many people that don't trust us…because they view our credibility for getting in people's bedrooms telling them how to live, and supporting injustice because it was easier than standing up for the right thing, so we've lost a lot of credibility. Religion too often aligns with the forces of hate and intolerance so this [mass incarceration] could be the thing that saves us, it is our actually doing the right thing.

Leaders with passion set examples, exhibit what it means to preach truth to power, and live it out by being actively involved. Their passion inspires others and reduces barriers to supporting those who are incarcerated. Together, they strive to create a more just world that is more pleasing and acceptable to God. Michelle Alexander (2010, 307) writes, "I believe it is possible to bring an end to mass incarceration and birth a new moral consensus about how we ought to be responding to poor folks of color and a consensus in support of basic human rights for all. But it is going to take some work."

At the conclusion of his interview, one pastor added,

> The church needs to make the change in mass incarceration. The church needs to get in the habit of creating a pathway for people to be able to release out and not judging folks. They all need an opportunity and by our spiritual gifts and discernment to work with men and women that are working their way out of prison. There are those who need to be there, they've killed, they've not been rehabilitated, they have a mean streak, but there are those who are really ready to transition out and with our spiritual discernment going into the prison being involved in the working of it, you're able to see working closely with them and helping them transition out."

James Cone (1997, xv) succinctly encapsulates all these sentiments:

> If the Church is to remain faithful to its Lord, it must make a decisive break with the structure of this society by launching a vehement attack on the evils of racism in all forms. It must become prophetic, demanding a radical change in the interlocking structures of this society.

The efforts, passions, and dedication of the faith leaders of this research have produced manifold results. They informed and moved people to act in response to the ancient sacred texts and their faith in the words and teachings; moreover, they have

sustained their efforts through timely reminders via sermons and direct public action. These leaders know that they cannot do this work alone and that it takes the work and dedication of many; but, as this proverb attributed to Lao Tzu states, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” (Lao Tzu Chap. 64). Table 3 illustrates the responses that support the second theme.

Table 3. Recruiting others, overcoming resistance (code words and verbatim phrases)

Development stages of a prison-related ministry	Continued sustained operations of prison ministry	Outcomes of prison ministry/ positive changes
While an associate, I wasn’t shy about where God had brought me from, gave others peace saying ‘I have a son, a daughter, or grandson in prison, tore down stigma, set church free from that.’	I started with seven men; each had some area of their life they were incarcerated to a degree. We went out with high hands.	…went through got certified as a prison guard, what they learn, I was appalled, my passion is trying to change mindset, how they thought, we did conflict resolution at Monroe Prison.
It’s the Lord first, speaking to my heart. If you win the souls, the blessings will come, and finances will come.	The importance of our ministry, to direct able to share our past testimonies. Each ministry set up to transition people back.	Having persons actually understand process. That’s what I’m doing now. I had to approach Board with opening up Women’s house…
Find a church that’s already doing it, let them mentor you, there are things you need to know to get involved with prison ministry. We got some bright minded incarcerated.	At Purdy if you’re a religious group you come in once a week; but with my ministries, I’m able to come in multiple times under different names of my ministries.	Four of my brothers have been incarcerated. They all have picked themselves up and turned their life around.
…cannot be a nice thing to do…see a job that’s to be done, who is qualified, or will get qualified, tell them make it live, if it’s in their heart they make it live, you see it…	The call, you don’t hear the call you’re not going to respond to the call. Put word out in the air, people hear something, get involved…	Totally positive, my children involved, watching people with all of God, go into ministry, who had negative impact on society, believed ugly reports about themselves…

Theme 3: Shame and Blame

The “shame and blame” game has a long and deep history associated with “bad behavior” and crime and punishment. From colonial stockades in the public square to women having to wear red scarlet letters attesting to actions deemed inappropriate, shame has been inflicted both formally and informally to make people serve and endure penitence for wayward behavior. Elements of this still exist today, though to a slightly lesser extent. Yet, still, there is lingering shame for many families when one of their members is or has been incarcerated. The researcher observes this in his ministry when an incarcerated person asks him to convey greetings to a family member in the community who might be a pastor or other community leader. Many times, the family member responds awkwardly to the greeting and later shares quietly that they do not like to acknowledge the incarcerated relative.

America’s history includes a legacy of laws, social practices, and policies specifically designed for Blacks and those of the African diaspora, which encumber, lessen, and disadvantage them and their future heirs so that others may have more and greater opportunities. The Emancipation Proclamation; the Civil War defeat of the slave-holding Confederate states; and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution—which ended slavery; defined national citizenship; and guaranteed voting rights regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude—did not end the deliberate and designed maltreatment of Black citizens. Writer and researcher Douglas A. Blackmon (2009, 28) writes about the criminal justice system’s long history of targeting Blacks to serve time to enrich the lives of whites in the aftermath of the Civil War:

> Instead of evidence showing black crime waves, the original records of county jails indicated thousands of arrests for inconsequential charges or for violations of

> laws specifically written to intimidate blacks—changing employers without permission, vagrancy, riding freight cars without a ticket, engaging in sexual activity—or loud talk—with white women. Repeatedly, the timing and scale of surges in arrests appeared more attuned to rises and dips in the need for cheap labor than any demonstrable acts of crime.

Shame and blame were present during the early years of these unjust and overtly racist laws. Many thought then, as now, that the high moral practices of one's life would remove or lessen such atrocities; but it was not to be. Blackmon goes on to write about the continuation of such practices into the twentieth century:

> By 1900, the South's judicial system had been wholly reconfigured to make one of its primary purposes the coercion of African Americans to comply with the social customs and labor demands of whites. It was not coincidental that 1901 also marked the final full disenfranchisement of nearly all blacks throughout the South. Sentences were handed down by provincial judges, local mayors, and justices of the peace—often men in the employ of the white business owners who relied on the forced labor produced by their judgments. (Blackmon 2009, 57)

Table 4 reveals words and phrases that signal salient notions of shame or blame; sadly, these notions represent a present day reality, though it is lessening to a degree for those who suffer the greatest harm from mass incarceration.

Table 4. Shame and blame (code words and verbatim phrases)

Shame and blame	Fear and anger	Shut down	Don't remind us
Things about justice that keep me up, they are unholy, people having different outcomes, based on ethnicity, skin color, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender expression…	…prisons are over crowed, people not rehabilitated. I think it's another form of slavery. I think about people's sentences being longer than their white counterparts…	…income, wealth gap, affects whites, drags down wages, then narcotized them saying, yeah, well you're broke, but at least you're not black. They say okay then, I won't have a revolution in the streets...	…you're not a hateful person but you're tolerating injustice to me. That's where the religious texts are calling us, saying hey, wait a minute you could be the nicest pharaoh in the world, but you're still pharaoh.
There's a sense of people getting what they deserve, goes back to the fields, slaves, can't justify doing this to humans, these people are not human…	I think safety goes along with fear. I wouldn't invite anyone into the church or house that would be a safety issue for the people.	Prisons; …a slow system dedicated to de-humanizing, especially, people of color, Trump was all over Central Park 5: these people are sub-human, raised to attack, we've got to lock them up, keep good white people safe…	…one's got to do mental gymnastics to justify this creature as not a human being, and there's money to be made, so how do you justify stealing prison labor? Say something's wrong with them, fundamentally.
When you hear someone is in prison, you think they did something wrong, don't want to condone bad behavior, they're deserving what they got, people hurt by drugs and gangs…	Fear and anger, rejection, fearful of retaliation, seen ministries, ministers involved in prison ministry, they set their church on fire for being involved…	…people had been given bad reports about themselves, way we see ourselves, way others see you, a victim's spirit, loser's spirit, gonna talk, present yourself that way…	Incarcerated; set up for them to fail, not structured for us to minister to them, cannot direct them when released where they can go…its setup for failure for them to return.
The reason why anyone goes to prison is wrong thinking. 'As a man thinks, so he is.'" My job turns disobedient to just, whose going put you in jail for doing right?	I've seen men in prison for six months after their release date because they didn't have a house to go to.	Are we a society based on justice? What do we want after someone served time, a broken spirit, destroyed life? It's what we're doing, I don't think that's justice.	…income determines whether you're arrested, whether you'll be booked, whether you're convicted, whether you'll be sentenced to prison and how long.

As table 4 shows, many factors contribute to the theme of shame and blame. When a community member is incarcerated, it impacts their family and produces a host of emotional responses. What are those emotions and how can they be understood by the larger community? The social dynamics and entanglements of blame setting as they relate to mass incarceration, and their impacts and cost to our society as a whole, need to be better understood. Experts have stated for years that mass incarceration has little to no direct correlation to crime levels or public safety issues. However, far too many incarcerated individuals and their families are unaware of the system that is designed to target and process them through the criminal justice system and perpetuate the theme of shame and blame. Those who are targeted should not be blamed for a system that sadly and quite efficiently does what it was designed to do.

This research sought to uncover factors that contribute to the unprecedented levels of incarceration of targeted members of our community. It will take the passion and commitment of people moved by the righteousness of God to halt and reverse the legacy of unjust treatment and oppression by our criminal justice system.

Each participant was asked, “What advice or counsel would you offer to a church or faith community that was considering starting a prison related ministry or program?” Across the board, their responses called for passionate people. Many of the respondents also identified the need for proper and timely information regarding what is really occurring in our criminal justice system and the various roles our police, courts, and others play in the process of mass incarceration.

Summary

The results of this research confirmed for the researcher that with proper and timely information, and people who are committed to God and passionate about social justice, we can imagine a real possibility of advancing and increasing the number of faith communities involved with or having ministries that intentionally address mass incarceration. The research participants each took different approaches to the development and maintenance of their respective ministries and programs; but their efforts affirmed their understanding of God, righteousness, justice, and their theological foundations. They moved, lived, and acted as our ancient text states, "like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither- whatever they do prospers" (Ps 1:3) and "…like a tree planted by the waters, they shall not move" (Jer 17:8).

This chapter presented the findings gleaned from studying five Protestant congregations and two Jewish synagogue communities. Each claimed long histories of working and developing faith community, prison-related ministries. Their responses were reviewed and analyzed to uncover impediments to starting a prison ministry and the critical factors that contribute to success for congregations or synagogues considering starting their own. The research found that there was a direct correlation between having a love for God (theme 1) and wanting to do and be a part of God's work in transforming the world with others (theme 2). Additionally, the research revealed that more and better information is needed to dislodge biases, untruths, and uninformed perceptions and positions about jails, courts, and prisons. Some of these are related to theme 3. Most of the research respondents were quite informed as to the nature of the injustices, racial

biases, and capricious treatment of the poor when it comes to dealing with mass incarceration. The next chapter considers the impact of the findings on the future of church involvement and calls for additional research and action in this critical area of injustice.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY

Introduction

This research study employed a qualitative multi-case study of five pastors of Protestant congregations as well as two rabbis and their Jewish synagogues. The study researched the faith leaders' thoughts, reflections, approaches, and actions regarding how they and their respective congregations and synagogues understand or interpret Scripture; moreover, it explored how their understandings compelled them to act from a theological basis on issues associated with America's current phenomenon of mass incarceration.

The central research question was how and why does a church or gathered faith community become actively involved in ministries and programs relating directly with or concerning mass incarceration? This research sought to identify some of the impediments that keep many faith leaders and their churches and synagogues from being deeply or actively involved in addressing mass incarceration in North America. This chapter offers some conclusions based on the research.

Implications for Future Research

It will be nearly impossible for a church or synagogue to implement a prison-related ministry without the buy-in and support of its spiritual and faith leader. One of this project's major findings was that the leader must exhibit a deep call to witness and obediently serve God. This study also confirmed that faith leaders with a dedicated call to serve God by supporting those who are incarcerated offer grace and compassion in a concrete manner and inspire a community of allies to offer opportunities for transformation.

This researcher discovered two areas connected to incarceration that need further exploration: shame and blame. During many prison visits over time, this researcher has been asked by various incarcerated individuals to pass on a greeting to a close family member; many times the family member is a minister or faith leader of a congregation. Nearly every time such a greeting is offered, however, the relative responds with micro-messages of unwanted engagement and withholds any kind of grace-filled acknowledgement of the incarcerated; indeed, most seem bothered that the researcher would broach the subject. At some later and more private moment, the relative often shares the rationale for not responding, or responding negatively, to the message. They indicate that they do not publicly acknowledge their incarcerated family member because, to them, the person reflects a failing related to character, values, or other issue—a failing not just of the incarcerated but the whole family. This is especially true for those who are clergy and those who are striving for, or have reached, a level of financial comfort. In other words, many family members feel a degree of *shame* about their incarcerated family member.

Many people perceive that all people who are jailed or incarcerated are there due to character flaws, deficiencies, or bad decisions made earlier in life. They *blame* the incarcerated out of unawareness, disbelief, or lack of information that perhaps the incarcerated are victims of systemic institutional programs and policies that target certain classes of individuals for arrest and incarceration. Michelle Alexander (2012, 130) explains in searing detail how our prison industrial complex is exempt from scrutiny by other American institutions, specifically the courts, from appearing to inflict harm and

oppressive policies against those who are targeted and caught up in its machinations:

> The Supreme Court has now closed the courthouse doors to claims of racial bias at every stage of the criminal justice process, from stops and searches to plea bargaining and sentencing. The system of mass incarceration is now, for all practical purposes, thoroughly immunized from claims of racial bias.

Alexander (2012, 130) continues to outline the oppressive, degrading actions of our criminal justice system:

> The process occurs in two stages. The first step is to grant law enforcement officials extraordinary discretion regarding whom to stop, search, arrest, and charge for drug offenses, thus ensuring that conscious and unconscious racial beliefs and stereotypes will be given free rein. Unbridled discretion inevitably creates huge racial disparities. Then, the damning step: Close the courthouse doors to all claims by defendants and private litigants that the criminal justice system operates in racially discriminatory fashion. Demand that anyone who wants to challenge racial bias in the system offer, in advance, clear proof that the racial disparities are the product of intentional racial discrimination—i.e., the work of a bigot. This evidence will almost never be available in the era of colorblindness, because everyone knows—but does not say—that the enemy in the War on Drugs can be identified by race. This simple design has helped to produce one of the most extraordinary systems of racialized social control the world has ever seen.

Continued research is also needed to examine how the industrial complex of incarceration impacts and harms families and communities that are over-represented and targeted by governmental, political, and economic factors in the machinations of our nation's businesses and operations. Such research could focus on those who have been incarcerated for excessive lengths of time yet have not been found guilty of a crime. Often, those individuals' only crimes are being poor and not having resources for bail or adequate legal representation. Bryan Stevenson (2014, 260), Head of the Equal Justice Initiative and the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration, says it this way:

> We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation. Fear and anger can make us vindictive and abusive, unjust and unfair, until we all suffer from the absence of mercy and we condemn ourselves as much as we victimize others. The closer we get to mass incarceration and extreme levels of punishment, the more I believe it's necessary to recognize that we all need mercy, we all need justice, and—perhaps—we all need some measure of unmerited grace.

Other reports, such as an article written by Brandon Patterson (2016) of Mother Jones, raise questions about the number of in-custody deaths reported by the United States Department of Justice (2016), Bureau of Justice Statistics. The Federal bureau's researchers reported 1,348 arrest related deaths between June 2015 and March 2016, for an average of 135 deaths per month. In their research and investigating, Mother Jones discovered that some police departments underreported such deaths or did not report them at all, and that the number of arrest-related deaths for that period was closer to 1,900. More research is needed regarding deaths caused by law-enforcement officials or others, insufficient or negligent medical care, or suicide while individuals are awaiting their trial or court date.

Contribution to the Practice of Ministerial Leadership

This research project is intended to be a resource for faith leaders, faith communities, or both who are considering implementing ministries that address the myriad issues associated with mass incarceration. For faith leaders, this research offers critical information to help them lead their communities to become actively involved in combatting our nations' phenomenon of mass incarceration. This project provides insights from a variety of historical, political, social, and theological disciplines.

Mass incarceration and the Church

Why is it problematic for the world's active representative of God to concern itself with addressing the phenomenon of mass incarceration in a manner that is pleasing and acceptable to God and in fidelity and obedience to both the word and will of God? We read in the book of Exodus that when ruling powers enslaved and subjected the Hebrew people to exceedingly harsh treatment, placing cruel overseers to drive them and increase their toil and work, they cried out to God and God heard and answered their prayers. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, said:

> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer [Jesus], 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' [Jesus] will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Mt 25: 35-40).

Striving to be to be righteous for God is a constant challenge. When we witness or encounter deliberate hurt and oppression in our lives, what do these words, teachings, and ways of God mean to us and our faith, to those who are being hurt, and to those who perpetuate and are advantaged by such hurt and oppression? Such concerns presented by the dilemma of mass incarceration, though not beyond God, may appear to be larger and greater than the church. In reality, they are not beyond the church due to the preached and professed presence and establishment of the church by God. "By the baptism of [Jesus's] suffering, death and resurrection You gave birth to Your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit."

(United Methodist Hymnal 1989, 14). We all have a role and responsibility to participate and strive to make or transform our world into a better and more just place.

Rabbi Abraham Herschel (2001, 138) states it this way: "…morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings, that indifference to evil is worse than evil itself, that in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible." Cone (2011, 163) writes this scathing analogy concerning white Christianity and America's mass incarceration:

> The church's most vexing problem today is how to define itself by the gospel of Jesus' cross. Where is the gospel of Jesus' cross revealed today? The lynching of black America is taking place in the criminal justice system where nearly one-third of black men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-eight are in prisons, jails, on parole, or waiting for their day in court. Nearly one-half of the more than two million people in prisons are black. That is one million black people behind bars, more than in colleges. Through private prisons and the 'war against drugs' whites have turned the brutality of their racist legal system into a profit-making venture for dying white towns and cities throughout America.

This research project was undertaken to support faith communities working to create a better and more just world for all, by addressing in a positive, transformative nature our nation's phenomenon of mass incarceration. Considerations for future research include a jarringly wide array of possibilities:

- What are the generational impacts and effects of incarceration? What are some of the unforeseen consequences of massively incarcerating specific racial groupings of people over an extended length of time?

- When incarceration, as it now operates, includes multiple generations of family members coming from specific communities, what are the results? What adjustments, if any, do the families or communities make to have rational dissonance to such conditions?

- What of expectations, dreams, hopes, and plans? How are such existential matters and concerns dealt with in a family and community seized by and in the grip of mass incarceration?

- What role can the church play to disrupt the pipeline of individuals from targeted communities filling our jails and prisons?

These suggestions represent a fraction of the possibilities for future research surrounding mass incarceration and the church.

Ultimately, the issues and concerns of the Church and how it does and does not relate to the phenomenon of America's mass incarceration are a continuation of the white Eurocentric church's history of discounting people who are not indigenous to that continent. This history of neglect and abuse has flourished and flowed from its early treatment of women, to people of color—whenever and wherever they have been encountered—and now the LGBTQ+ community. The sad history and legacy of the western church is such that when an individual or group is encountered and deemed not to correspond to a white heterosexual male standard, that difference—whatever it may be—is immediately determined to be deficient and therefore lacking in the full spectrum of the total human embodiment. This determination leads to the denial of certain rights and privileges for those individuals or groups. Such conditions have rightly given rise to various liberation theologies, from Latin, to Black, to Queer, to Womanist. This researcher must state emphatically that this last area of study was not reviewed or addressed in this specific research project.

Summary

This chapter summarized the efforts and results of this research project, which investigated five protestant churches and two synagogues and the key factors that compelled them and their faith communities to develop ministries related to America's phenomenon of mass incarceration. The research began with seven faith leaders who were asked to be interviewed concerning their founding of or involvement in ministries

related to incarceration. The research questions explored the development of their faith and its role, if any, in their involvement in prison ministry. They were also asked to speak about impediments they faced when starting their ministries and factors that supported their development. The data gathered from the research and interviews were cataloged, analyzed, and presented in this written project.

The major conclusion of this research revealed that for a faith community, be it a church or synagogue, to develop a ministry related to mass incarceration, it must have a leader who is first and foremost deeply committed to God. The leader must also have a heart to do God's work for and with those who are suffering in oppressive systems such as our nation's criminal justice system and the prison industrial complex.

This research revealed three areas in which further study would benefit both church and society: the shame and blame phenomena that are so engrained within the framework of incarceration, and the impact of mass incarceration on the immediate families of the incarcerated and their wider community. Blame is often directed at the incarcerated and allows institutional or systemic factors to go unquestioned or unchallenged when specific individuals or communities are disproportionately represented in the prison industrial complex. Social, educational, economic, and criminal policies work in conjunction to repeatedly deliver people from certain racial community groups or economic classes to prison. However, to blame the victims is to miss the true picture and circumstance of what truly is transpiring. Shame involves the stigma that is placed on the incarcerated and their families. More research is needed to understand how families, communities, culture, and society have developed shame concerning those incarcerated and how the perpetuation of this unjust situation has gone unchallenged.

The third issue concerns the generational impact that incarceration visits upon those families and communities intentionally targeted by the manifold machinations of the criminal justice system, which have led to the reality of mass incarceration. What is the impact, over time, to families with multiple generations of males who are incarcerated? How are those families' understandings and perceptions of life affected? Are their dreams, hopes, and opportunities diminished, and are their hopes and dreams radically different from those of families who are not enduring similar circumstances? More questions than answers exist at the moment; additional research and study would provide crucial knowledge regarding how incarceration impacts families.

This research study provides a template of sorts for ministerial leaders who are considering developing a prisons related ministry related directly to America's phenomenon of mass incarceration.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval

July 11, 2019

Steve E. Baber
School of Theology and Ministry
Seattle University

Dear Rev. Baber,

Thank you for submitting final revisions for protocol **FY2019-025 "A Church's Response to Mass-Incarceration,"** now approved until December 1, 2019.

IRB approval expiration for student principal investigators aligns with anticipated graduation dates, and continuing approval depends on registered status at Seattle University. The SU IRB cannot provide oversight for research studies led by non-active SU affiliates, such as alumni or unregistered students.

Carefully review the following post-approval policies, for which your faculty adviser is jointly responsible to ensure that you follow. Always use the most updated forms on our website.

- If you want to make any changes to the protocol during the course of the study (including an extension due to a later graduation date), you must submit an **IRB Modification Request** before implementing the change. You may not initiate any modifications without *written* IRB approval.
- If you conclude data *collection* and will no longer work with or contact participants (i.e., data analysis stage only), you may submit a **Downgrade to Exempt** request, eliminating the requirement for further IRB oversight or closeout.
- The IRB will contact you prior to **Dec. 1, 2019**, to inquire about the protocol status, so we can explore extensions or closure and remain remain compliant with Federal and SU human subjects protections policies.
- Finally, if for any reason, you discontinue the project, please notify the IRB immediately, so we can mark the protocol as withdrawn.

Sincerely,

Andrea McDowell, PhD
IRB Administrator

Email: irb@seattleu.edu
Phone: (206) 296-2585

cc: Dr. Sharon Callahan, Faculty Adviser

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE:	A Church's Response to Mass incarceration
INVESTIGATOR:	Steve E Baber, School of Theology, Seattle University, (206)296-2585
ADVISOR: (if applicable)	Dr. Sharon Henderson-Callahan, Dean Doctor of Ministry Program, School of Theology, Seattle University (206)296-5336
PURPOSE:	You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate **[How and what are key factors that contribute to a church becoming involved or starting a mass incarceration ministry]**. You will be asked to complete **[Research participants will be interviewed and possibly fill out a questionnaire, over a course of time from one to two hours total.]**.
SOURCE OF SUPPORT:	This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Doctoral of ministry** degree in _____ STM at Seattle University. **OR** This study is supported by a grant from None,
RISKS:	There are no known risks associated with this study. However, **as a means of gathering data and information questions will be asked, for the protection of research participants identification markers will mask their direct identity. Confidential protocols will be employed to minimize opportunities for others outside of principal investigator or others to know respective respondent's answers to specific questions.**
BENEFITS:	**There is no direct benefit to participants of this research, this research however is being undertaken to determine how our greater society and culture can be improved by the Christian community vis-a-vi the Church taking a more active deliberative role in addressing all the harms mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex is visiting upon our society and nation.** **The researcher will be sharing results this research with other congregations, policy makers and organizations in ways that are both informative and helpful in positively addressing this unjust issue of mass incarceration.**
INCENTIVES:	**You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study."** Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: **No names will be collected, nor will demographic information for this research.** Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). All research materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked cabinet with limited access, any electronic data be encrypted with principal investigator having sole control of access. Human subject's research regulations require that data be kept for a minimum of three (3) years. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential. Should we convene a **focus groups**, to collect additional data Please understand that Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a focus group setting; however, we ask all participants to respect others' privacy and keep all information shared confidential." However, if we learn you intend to harm yourself or others, we must notify the authorities.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. **[Rev. Steve E. Baber, (206)854-8688, revbaber@comcast.net. A summary of the research data should be available three to four months after the current time frame of approval or denial of this informed consent form.**

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any concerns about my participation in this study, I may call **[Steve E Baber]**, who is asking me to participate, at **[(206)854-8688]** If I have any concerns that my rights are being violated, I may contact Dr. Michelle DuBois, Chair of the Seattle University Institutional Review Board at (206) 296-2585.

Distribute this "informational sheet" for participants to retain and conduct oral consent (that is, after they have read the information sheet, their choice to participate represents their consent).

APPENDIX C

Research Interview Questions

RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long have you been associated with this church?

2. What were the main reasons you became a part/member of this congregation?

3. What if any role should God have or play in our society and culture? And why?

4. What is the role of individual Christians in our society and culture?

5. What if any is the role of the local church in culture and society?

6. What or how the role of the church in society and culture determined?

7. How do you know when your church is doing the Will of God?

8. Does God expect, or have expectations of the church to be active in culture and society?

9. Are there areas of culture and society where the church should stay out of? If so, where and why?

10. What if any are the limits of ministry and witness that are beyond the purview of the church?

11. What is your understanding of social-justice issues and the role if any the church plays in such?

12. How does your church determine the ministries it will actively develop and support?

13. What for you are some of the key and critical factors for determining and selecting your church's ministries?

14. What is lease important in selecting and determining your church's ministries?

15. What if any were the resistance positions and arguments against starting or doing a prison related ministry in your church?

16. What would you offer to other church's as an important consideration when starting or thinking about starting a prison ministry?

17. Has incarceration had any impact on you or your family, if so what or how?

18. What is your understanding of the term mass incarceration?

19. What is your understanding of the term prison-industrial complex?

20. Is there any discomfort in sharing and or talking about mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex?

21. Is there a question you would have wanted or liked asked, that was not?

22. Do you have any closing comments or concerns you would like to share?

APPENDIX D

Additional Resources

Criminal Justice

The Sentencing Project. 2019. "The Facts: Criminal Justice Facts." https://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/

Faith Communities Background Material

Handbook for Jewish Communities Fighting Incarceration. 2016. Edited by Rabbi Lev Meirowitz Nelson. New York: T'ruah. https://www.truah.org/resources/handbook-for-jewish-communities-fighting-mass incarceration/

Bend the Arc: https://www.bendthearc.us/

Sermon on Rabbi Menachem Creditor's blog: http://rabbicreditor.blogspot.com/2014/10/rabbi-michael-rothbaum-fergusonfargesn.html